



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg The Children, Young People and Education Committee

**Dydd Iau, 22 Ionawr 2015
Thursday, 22 January 2015**

Cynnwys Contents

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

Bil Cymwysterau Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 4
The Qualifications Wales Bill—Evidence Session 4

Bil Cymwysterau Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 5
Qualifications Wales Bill—Evidence Session 5

Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance**

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
John Griffiths	Llafur Labour
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Chair of the Committee)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Jim Bennett	Pennaeth, Coleg Gwent Principal, Coleg Gwent
Anne-Marie Duffy	Cyfarwyddwr Cymwysterau, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Director of Qualifications, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Justin Edwards	Prif Weithredwr, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Chief Executive, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Yr Athro / Professor John Grattan	Cadeirydd Grŵp Cynghori ar Ddysgu ac Addysgu Prifysgolion Cymru, a Dirprwy Is-ganghellor, Prifysgol Aberystwth Chair of the Universities Wales Learning and Teaching Advisory Group, and Pro Vice-chancellor, Aberystwyth University
Paul McGlade	Rheolwr Cenedlaethol Iwerddon a Chymru, Oxford Cambridge and RSA National Manager for Ireland and Wales, Oxford Cambridge and RSA
Derek Richardson	Cyfarwyddwr, Datblygu ac Asesu Cymwysterau, Gwasanaethau Cymwysterau Pearson (Edexcel) Director, Qualifications Development and Assessment for Pearson Qualification Services (Edexcel)
Greg Walker	Prif Weithredwr, ColegauCymru Chief Executive, CollegesWales
Amanda Wilkinson	Cyfarwyddwr, Prifysgolion Cymru Director, Universities Wales

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Michael Dauncey	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Gwyn Griffiths	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Gareth Pembridge	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Gareth Rogers	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:36.
The meeting began at 09:36.*

**Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. We've had apologies this morning from David Rees, Lynne Neagle and Bethan Jenkins; there are no substitutions. So, that's that. The usual housekeeping rules are there. I don't think that I have to recite them, do I? I think we all know them. I think the main one is probably if the fire alarm should operate, then we'll wait and take our directions from the ushers. I don't think anyone has any interests that they wish to declare. No. I think I asked that at the start of the thing, so I probably won't ask that now; we've asked that and established that. So, that's fine.

**Bil Cymwysterau Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 4
The Qualifications Wales Bill—Evidence Session 4**

[2] **Ann Jones:** We'll move on, then, to the main items in the public session today, to take our evidence again on the Qualifications Wales Bill. Our first set of people coming in to give us some evidence are Universities Wales and ColegauCymru. Would you like to introduce yourselves for the record and then, if it's okay, we'll go straight into some questions? Jim, shall we start with you?

[3] **Mr Bennett:** Good morning. I'm Jim Bennett. I'm the principal of Coleg Gwent.

[4] **Dr Walker:** Good morning. Greg Walker, ColegauCymru.

[5] **Professor Grattan:** Good morning. I'm John Grattan. I'm a pro vice-chancellor at Aberystwyth University, and I'm here with Universities Wales.

[6] **Ms Wilkinson:** Amanda Wilkinson, Universities Wales.

[7] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks very much. We've had papers from you, so thanks very

much for those. Members will have read them. We've got sets of questions, so if we can move on. Simon, will you take the first set?

[8] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch. Os caf fi eu gofyn yn Gymraeg. Rwyf jest am ddechrau gyda dehongliad y Llywodraeth o'r diffygion yn y system bresennol—ac, wrth gwrs, mae'r Bil hwn yn rhan o'r ymateb i'r diffygion hynny—a'ch ymateb chi fel dau gorff i'r dehongliad hwnnw. Hynny yw, a ydych yn cytuno â'r dehongliad hwnnw ac a ydych yn meddwl bod y Bil yma yn cynnwys yr holl atebion i'r ffaeledau hynny sydd wedi cael eu hadnabod, yn gyntaf yn yr adroddiad, wrth gwrs, ac yn awr yn y Bil?

Simon Thomas: Thank you. If I can ask them in Welsh. I just want to start with the interpretation of the Government of the limitations in the current system—and, of course, this Bill is part of the response to those limitations—and your response as two bodies to that interpretation. That is, do you agree with that interpretation and do you think that this Bill does include all of the solutions to those limitations that have been identified, first by the report, of course, and now in the Bill?

[9] **Dr Walker:** The straight answer to that, Simon, is: 'yes', fundamentally, in that the four issues outlined in the explanatory memorandum, which were weaknesses of the current system, I think, pretty much are addressed in the Bill. There was a fifth weakness, or limitation, that we also mentioned in our written evidence, which is the lack of an arm's-length arrangement between the Government and the regulatory function. For the sake of perception and for the sake of confidence, we think that that arm's-length principle should be instituted and Qualifications Wales is obviously one way to do that. So, we've listed five limitations in addition—well, one extra—to the ones that have been outlined in the explanatory memorandum.

[10] **Simon Thomas:** But the Bill deals with extra limitation, in your opinion.

[11] **Dr Walker:** Yes, indeed, although it's not mentioned, ironically, in the—

[12] **Simon Thomas:** And it's the one that politicians are most interested in, possibly.

[13] **Dr Walker:** Yes, and I can understand why the Government didn't want to, sort of, say that it wasn't, you know, competent to do a function that it's already exercising, and certainly we, you know, have no critique of the way that the Welsh Government have been regulating qualifications fundamentally in the last few years. But, I think, for the sake of perception and for the sake of clarity, especially for the media and for audiences across the border, I think having an independent take on qualifications will be useful.

[14] **Simon Thomas:** And, Universities Wales, do you agree with that analysis?

[15] **Ms Wilkinson:** I think we do, really, yes. I mean, I think the other issue is how many qualifications we currently have operating in Wales, and the disparity that we have in terms of regulatory arrangements. In terms of, you know, what Scotland's looked to do, I think cutting almost by half the number of qualifications from about 4,000 to 2,000, and we have about 11,000, you know, there have to be issues there, and we think this is the right sort of body to look at that.

[16] **Simon Thomas:** One of the things that certainly Universities Wales has mentioned in the past—and I think it's in this evidence; I can't put my finger on it quite at the moment, but I think it's in this evidence as well—is how important it is to maintain the confidence of the public in the system. Obviously, the arm's-length principle helps with that, but are there other features of the Bill that you believe are strong enough, or would you want to add to the Bill?

[17] **Professor Grattan:** I would just say that it's not just the confidence of the public

within Wales, it's the confidence of the public beyond Wales. I think it's very important that qualifications within Wales are clearly mapped to the qualifications framework on a European scale. I think this will help do that exactly. It will also help us in universities exactly understand what each qualification represents and then how we handle that. So, we very much welcome it.

[18] **Simon Thomas:** That's very clear for vocational qualifications in particular, isn't it, how that framework would work?

[19] **Professor Grattan:** Yes.

[20] **Simon Thomas:** Is it as clear for the GCSEs and the A-levels, in that sense?

[21] **Professor Grattan:** Well, we understand—. That is our normal business, so we understand how to deal with those very easily. We're all putting in place now statements about how we're flexible and conditional in admissions to deal with situations like this. As I said, the proper mapping of these qualifications will help us deal with that and facilitate people getting access to higher education, which is what we all want to do.

[22] **Simon Thomas:** Océ. Diolch. **Simon Thomas:** Okay. Thank you.

[23] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Thank you. Can we move on to the independence of the new body and the relationship with stakeholders? Keith first and then I'll come to Angela.

[24] **Keith Davies:** I mean, you did start on this, I think, Greg, earlier about the independence of the new body, but I can go back to when we had ACCAC, the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, but ACCAC was a body of Government, in a sense; Qualifications Wales isn't, is it?

[25] **Dr Walker:** It's a statutory body, isn't it? So, it's got its own full statutory underpinning and it has accountabilities to this body as well as to the Welsh Government. So, in that sense, it's got an extra bit of arm's length—an extra-long arm, perhaps, to mix my metaphors—compared to ACCAC, perhaps.

[26] **Keith Davies:** Yes, but if I say, going back to the time when we had ACCAC, ACCAC was full of civil servants and didn't have independent representatives, whereas this new qualifications body will have independent representatives of Government.

[27] **Dr Walker:** Quite, although I would expect the initial tranche of officials serving in Qualifications Wales would be TUPE-transferred in from Welsh Government, but the board itself would be independent and the chief executive also has a particular role that is outlined in the Bill as well, which seems to be independent as well.

[28] **Ann Jones:** Keith, I think Angela wants to come in on that point before we come to Universities Wales.

[29] **Angela Burns:** Well, actually, no, it was—. I think Keith was raising a really interesting point and I noted in the Universities Wales submission that you have real concern that you don't think Universities Wales would be represented on the qualifications board, and I wondered also if ColegauCymru felt the same, too.

[30] **Ann Jones:** Well, there we are.

[31] **Angela Burns:** I mean, you didn't mention that, I don't think, in your submission, and I'm not sure, to be honest with you, what the make-up will be in terms of the external

stakeholders, but Universities Wales were very clear that you're not going to have a—. You are concerned, I think. You've put:

[32] 'It is absolutely vital that universities are represented appropriately on the Qualifications Wales Board, and it is deeply concerning that universities will not have sufficient representation under the current proposals.'

[33] I wonder if you could expand on that.

[34] **Professor Grattan:** Well, just to pick up a couple of points, I think the model is one that we're comfortable with. Obviously, many agencies have civil servants working within them. I think it's the establishment of the board that sets the direction of travel and the management and the tone and tenor of the organisation. The composition, then, of the board, I think, is important and I think there's an opportunity, if we get this right, to really get all the qualifications providers within Wales and universities working together in a way that's of benefit to the students—to all potential students.

[35] I'm also on the board of the QAA, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and I was appointed to the board of the QAA as the representative for HEFCW, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. I would think that, as we designed the board for this body, it would be natural and normal for representatives from the university sector to be appointed to that board to help steer it.

09:45

[36] **Angela Burns:** Do you have a view, ColegauCymru?

[37] **Dr Walker:** Only that they've pursued a public appointments process, an open process, with a skillset that is quite broad and varied. They want to get the best people on the board, wherever they come from. If there isn't anybody with relevant university experience, I think people will be disappointed and there may be a case to go out to advertisement again, so that they do get somebody with that experience, so—

[38] **Angela Burns:** Can I just push you on this, though? Do you actually believe that Qualifications Wales should have a designated, set number of membership slots—one for universities, one for the colleges, et cetera—or not? You're shaking your head, Jim, so, obviously—

[39] **Mr Bennett:** I think that would simply be too mechanical a process. If the model is a representative model in which members of that board have got a constituency and a mandate, then that's what you would do, but it's not. It's a matter of balancing skillsets.

[40] **Angela Burns:** Thank you.

[41] **Ann Jones:** Suzy, on this point, and then we need to—.

[42] **Suzy Davies:** Yeah, it still is on this point. If you're not convinced that specific representation is needed, I'm wondering how you would approach this. I mean, one of the purposes of the Bill is to meet the needs of the learner in Wales, and I would take the view that those needs would include an ability to compete on a global stage, if you like. How sure are you that the views of colleges and universities would be represented in identifying the needs of learners in Wales if you're not on this board?

[43] **Ms Wilkinson:** I suppose what I would say is that our experience to date, going through the review process, has been very positive and, obviously, there's been very keen

engagement from the individuals involved in that process. So, there is no evidence to suggest that that wouldn't continue. On the other hand, that's a different thing to having a process that determines that those things will be done. Certainly, if you look at higher education, we have processes that do that, so that you're covering all the bases. So, the issue would be, 'What's the process?', from our point of view.

[44] **Ann Jones:** Okay?

[45] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, that's fine.

[46] **Keith Davies:** Just to follow up, Chair—

[47] **Ann Jones:** Yes, certainly.

[48] **Keith Davies:** I'm not sure how UCAS fits into all of this in terms of—. Let's say we have new A-levels. Does UCAS actually look at individual qualifications or does it say, 'The qualifications body for Wales has approved this history A-level' or whatever, and because that's happened, then UCAS would give it the UCAS points that it gives to other A-levels? Is that how it works?

[49] **Professor Grattan:** That's how I would understand the system to work, yes.

[50] **Dr Walker:** How they determine the tariff for, say, the new Welsh baccalaureate, will be important for—

[51] **Keith Davies:** Oh, no, I could tell you that the new Welsh baccalaureate—. We had to go to UCAS to discuss the Welsh bac with UCAS to see what points were given. I'm just—

[52] **Ms Wilkinson:** UCAS will go through this process with all sorts of qualifications, as will universities. We're dealing with qualifications from all over the world. You know, England's just going through a process of changing its qualifications, and we'll have to have a think about that as well. This is, actually, quite a normal process for us, and I'm not sure we should be too concerned about that.

[53] **Professor Grattan:** Just to add briefly, it is normal business for us. We do map qualifications onto the, sort of, Welsh system naturally from around the world, so it's normal for us.

[54] **Keith Davies:** Okay, thank you.

[55] **Ann Jones:** Are you happy? Yes, okay. We move on, then, to the confidence in the qualifications system and the regard for Qualifications Wales's qualifications. John.

[56] **John Griffiths:** Yes, well, it sort of continues that theme, really, because, obviously, it's very important that qualifications and the qualifications system in Wales have confidence placed in them. What I'm interested in, really, is your views on to what extent the Bill will lead to greater confidence in those Wales-specific qualifications, and how you would expect to regard a Qualifications Wales-approved qualification? What are your expectations of the impact of the Bill in that regard?

[57] **Professor Grattan:** My understanding is that there are about 11,000 qualifications being offered within Wales. That's quite a galaxy of things to try to understand, and I think the introduction of Qualifications Wales will make that a lot easier for us. It will help us understand what the qualifications are and that the process that we'd be engaged in then, as I said earlier, would be explicitly mapping all these qualifications onto the qualifications

framework, which is pan-European, and we would precisely understand then exactly where it lay. And, equally so with employers. I think that's very important. So, at universities now, we issue the advanced transcripts and on those we put the marks that Aberystwyth, Swansea or Cardiff award for any module. But, we will actually say how many European credit transfer points that's equivalent to, as well. So, it's that internationalism of the qualification and that mapping, internationally, that's most important here and I think this really does help.

[58] **Dr Walker:** Chair, if I might come in on that, actually. We've put in our response to your question—we may be coming up to questions on this—as to whether there are any omissions in the Bill. We certainly think it would be good to give the body, Qualifications Wales, a specific remit to look at how Wales's qualifications framework maps on to the European qualifications framework and other associated arrangements, because we think it's important, in terms of European mobility, for our students. It's something we've done quite successfully already, but that needs to continue. It might just be worth putting that on the face of the Bill in some way. Also, you'd expect us to say that we would think it was important that the institution itself—Qualifications Wales—promotes a parity of esteem between general qualifications, academic qualifications and vocational qualifications. That's still a huge issue for us in Wales—for learners, for parents and for our society and our economic prospects. So, I think that really does need to be put in as a specific sub-clause in the Bill. That would be very helpful.

[59] **Ann Jones:** Okay. On this point, Angela.

[60] **Angela Burns:** On making sure it's European-wide and recognised, you refer to an agency called NARIC, which I wasn't aware of and I couldn't find an awful lot out about last night. I wondered if either you, or our team, may be able to give us a little bit more briefing on them, because, by reading the Universities Wales paper, they seem to be, sort of, little mini gods in terms of going across the world and saying, 'This is you, match here, there and everywhere', but I wasn't aware of them before. Sorry, committee members, if you know of this organisation, but I didn't.

[61] **Professor Grattan:** Don't press me on the acronym; if you do, I'll have to look in my papers. [*Laughter.*] But, effectively, they aren't little gods, they are a tool for us, and the tool is used very widely. Effectively, if we had students coming to us from Azerbaijan, or we had an approach from a university, what it will do is simply say that, outside the European credit framework, these map onto our credit framework in this way. That allows us to judge whether a student coming from a university in the third year from, say, Kazakhstan, can come into the third year in Wales, or whether we have to put them into the first year. They also give us a ranking of the universities and that's very important as well, especially when we're dealing with things like tier 4 visa requirements, et cetera. We're very careful to make sure that we understand where students are coming from and that they're recognised universities and recognised qualifications. Every university uses them. So, they're very, very useful; they're not perfect, but it's a start.

[62] **Angela Burns:** So, we need to obviously use them in reverse.

[63] **Professor Grattan:** Yes.

[64] **Simon Thomas:** Clearly, some universities use it more effectively than others.

[65] **Professor Grattan:** I'm not going to go there. [*Laughter.*]

[66] **Ann Jones:** John, are you—?

[67] **John Griffiths:** Yes. Just one further question, Chair, really, again, on the worth and

the portability of our qualifications in Wales, and whether you have any concerns regarding divergence between Wales and England on that front, and whether it would, potentially, damage that worth and the portability of Wales's qualifications.

[68] **Professor Grattan:** Shall I take this first? I would have no concerns in that regard. In fact, I would think this would really make it clear that Welsh qualifications were second to none.

[69] **Ms Wilkinson:** We've avoided, through the process we've run, some of the debates that we've had elsewhere, for example on AS-levels, so I think that we're quite clear that we've come to a good conclusion from a thorough process. We have no concerns about the status of the qualification, or the status it should attract. There is, clearly, a lot of work to do on communicating that and we hope we'll be part of that process.

[70] **Ann Jones:** Jim or Greg?

[71] **Dr Walker:** Similarly, Chair, ColegauCymru has been very clear that, on general qualifications, we wanted to see the retention of controlled assessment. We didn't want to see the 100% terminal assessment that's been introduced in some of the academic qualifications in England. Again, the AS issue: similarly, there's been a lot of criticism of the decision made in England. We would agree with the criticism of the changes made in England and want to see the retention of AS, as it is, in Wales. So, you know, I don't think Wales can be asked to simply align its qualifications to England, whatever the cost for learners in terms of the right syllabus and the right approach to assessment.

[72] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. Aled, did you have a point on this?

[73] **Aled Roberts:** Jest ar y pwynt yna, rwy'n meddwl y byddai pob un ohonom ni'n cytuno ei bod yn bwysig ein bod ni'n gallu canlyn ein llwybr ein hunain yma yng Nghymru, ac rwy'n cytuno bod nifer fawr o'r penderfyniadau yn Lloegr ddim yn rhai i'w canmol, ond roedd Gareth Pierce, yr wythnos diwethaf, ar ran CBAC, yn mynegi cryn bryder ynglŷn â'r posibiliad y bydd rhai o'r trefniadau rhwng y tair gwlad ar hyn o bryd, hwyrach, yn gwanhau. A oes gennych chi unrhyw farn ar hynny?

Aled Roberts: Just on that point, really, I think each one of us would agree that it is important that we can follow our own path here in Wales, and I agree that a number of the decisions taken in England aren't ones to be praised, but Gareth Pierce, last week, on behalf of WJEC, expressed concern about the possibility that some of the arrangements between the three countries at present, perhaps, would weaken. Do you have any views on that?

[74] **Dr Walker:** That's going to be a tricky arrangement to maintain in the new system, there's no doubt about it, and this will require a lot of co-ordination and a concerted effort between the three regulatory regimes. All three of them will be independent regulatory bodies by that time. It's going to be a difficult task. I think it's probably one that's still do-able and attainable. It depends, I think, on the attitude of the Secretary of State for Education in England and where the direction of travel is in terms of qualifications after 2015. I don't think it's impossible. I noted Gareth's comments and the three-country system has been creaking in some ways for the last two or three years, given some of the political rows that have occurred over exams and qualifications in that period. Hopefully, what this Bill is about is to try to put qualifications regulations in Wales beyond, you know, reproach and beyond question by making it so clearly independent of ministerial direction.

[75] **Ann Jones:** Okay. John, are you content?

[76] **John Griffiths:** That's fine. Yeah.

[77] **Ann Jones:** Okay. On prioritising and restricting qualifications: Simon.

[78] **Simon Thomas:** Ie, diolch. Efallai y gallwn ni droi at y rhan o'r Bil sydd, am wn i, y mwyaf dadleuol o bosib, lle mae'n cyflwyno'r cysyniad yma y gellir blaenoriaethu cymwysterau yng Nghymru a hefyd cyfyngu ar nifer y cymwysterau a'r dewis, os liciwch chi, sydd ar gael. Nawr, rydym ni eisoes wedi cyffwrdd â'r ffaith bod yna rai miloedd—does neb cweit yn siŵr, ond mae yna filoedd yn sicr—o gymwysterau gwahanol yn cael eu cynnig. Mae'n amhosib dilyn y peth yna drwyddo weithiau ac i rywun mewn busnes wybod yn union sut mae'r cymhwyster yma'n ffitio i mewn i gymhwyster arall. Yn sicr, ar yr ochr alwedigaethol, nid yw mor glir a'r ochr academaidd ynglŷn â sut mae popeth yn ffitio gyda'i gilydd. A ydych chi'n meddwl bod y darpariaethau yn y Bil yn mynd i'r afael â'r broblem yma mewn ffordd ystyrlon, ac mewn ffordd a fydd yn ennill hyder yn y system?

Simon Thomas: Yes, thank you very much. Perhaps we can turn now to the part of the Bill that is most controversial perhaps, where it introduces this concept of prioritising qualifications in Wales and also restricting the number of qualifications and the selection, if you like, that is available. Now, we've already touched upon the fact that there are thousands—well, nobody's quite sure of the number, but there are thousands—of different qualifications that are offered. It's impossible to follow that through sometimes and for someone in business to know exactly how the qualification fits into other qualifications. Certainly, on the vocational side, it's not as clear as it is on the academic side in terms of how things fit together. Do you think that the provisions in the Bill tackle this problem in a way that's meaningful and in a way that will gain confidence in the system?

[79] **Dr Walker:** I think, Chair, it's a difficult balance to strike between having—. I think everybody would be critical of the 11,000 qualifications that were on DAQW a couple of years ago now. Those have been consolidated already. DAQW is the qualifications database that the Welsh Government holds. At the same time, I think there would be concern if there were monopoly suppliers of key vocational qualifications, and if there wasn't a choice for colleges and schools to choose between different types of—.

[80] **Simon Thomas:** I'll just hold you, if I may, for a second there, because you said,

[81] 'concern if there were monopoly suppliers of key vocational qualifications'.

[82] But, it looks like there'll be a monopoly supplier of key academic qualifications.

[83] **Dr Walker:** Yes.

[84] **Simon Thomas:** You're looking for parity of esteem. Why should be treating one different to the other?

[85] **Dr Walker:** Well, I think that's potentially because the market in Wales for general qualifications isn't going to be big enough for the WJEC to offer GCSEs and also for OCR, or whoever else would be interested, to do so. You know, the sheer size of the market would mitigate against that. On VQs, I think there'll be a different picture. You've got very credible awarding organisations—City and Guilds and so on—that have international recognition and have long-standing usage in Wales. I think to just simply say, as a matter of policy, that we need to slash the number of approved qualifications in key vocational areas by 90% or something, regardless of the credibility, acceptability and use of those qualifications, would be, you know, very much over the top, but—.

[86] **Simon Thomas:** If you take that argument from the other perspective, what is the purpose of competition within vocational qualifications? What does it do?

[87] **Dr Walker:** Well, Jim may be able to—.

[88] **Simon Thomas:** Apart from making everybody confused.

[89] **Mr Bennett:** That is a good question. There are at least two issues here. One is the question of the variety of qualifications: is 11,000 too many? When you look at the number of occupations, the number of skill sets, the number of levels out there in the wide world, then clearly we need a lot of qualifications.

[90] **Simon Thomas:** But, we're no longer training people to do the same job for 40 years.

[91] **Mr Bennett:** No.

[92] **Simon Thomas:** So, we no longer need, you know, the slight difference between one qualification in car mechanics and another qualification in car mechanics. Surely that really should be much more at a basic level now about how you learn to do car mechanics and how you might build on that to become your own business person, running your own business. You know, there are other things coming in now, aren't there? Are they being reflected in the system?

10:00

[93] **Mr Bennett:** I think that's true. The fact that we're not training people for a job for life doesn't mean that there are fewer occupations, but, nonetheless, part of the variety has resulted from competition in the market. If you have commercial awarding bodies competing with each other, then, clearly, they have a vested interest to differentiate their products from others. A lot of the variety has come from that, and I see that being largely a negative influence, particularly if you look at it in the context of very open, almost punitive league tables, funding based on qualifications, and couple that with commercial awarding bodies that are making money out of business, then you have a fairly toxic mix of influences. I see Qualifications Wales, with part of its remit to rationalise those qualifications and to make sure that they're all there for a particular purpose, is entirely beneficial in that context.

[94] **Simon Thomas:** So—

[95] **Ann Jones:** Sorry, I think Keith's got something on this first, and then I'll come back to you, Simon.

[96] **Keith Davies:** Jest i ddilyn hynny nawr, buom ni fel pwyllgor lan yn yr Alban i weld beth oedd yn digwydd yn yr Alban, ac mor belled ag yr oedd cyrsiau galwedigaethol yn y cwestiwn, roedd y corff yn yr Alban yn penderfynu pa rai fyddai ar gael i bobl ifanc yr Alban. Felly, nhw oedd yn penderfynu. Ond, wrth gwrs, yn yr Alban, mae'r corff yno yn gorff dyfarnu, wedyn, mor belled ag y mae TGAU a lefel A yn y cwestiwn. Yr amser ddechreuon ni ar Gymwysterau Cymru, roedd rhyw sôn, efallai, y dylai Cymwysterau Cymru fod yn gorff dyfarnu. Nawr, rwy'n cytuno'n llwyr â'r hyn oedd yn digwydd yn yr Alban. Mae shwt gymaint, fel roedd Simon yn dweud, o gyrsiau galwedigaethol—y

Keith Davies: Just to follow on from that now, as a committee, we visited Scotland to see what was happening in Scotland, and as far as the vocational courses were concerned, the body in Scotland determined which ones would be available to the young people of Scotland. So, they would decide. But, of course, in Scotland, the body there is an awarding body, as well, as far as GCSEs and A-levels are concerned. When we started on Qualifications Wales, there was some talk about the fact that Qualifications Wales should be an awarding body. Now, I agree completely with what was happening in Scotland. So many vocational courses, as Simon said, are available—thousands and

miloedd ar filoedd—ac wedyn gallaf weld Cymwysterau Cymru yn penderfynu pwy sy'n mynd i'w cynnig nhw, a faint ohonyn nhw fydd. Ond, beth am y cwestiwn hyn: a ddylai Cymwysterau Cymru fod yn gorff dyfarnu hefyd, mor belled, dywedwch, â bod TGAU a lefel A yn y cwestiwn?

thousands—and so I can see Qualifications Wales deciding who's going to offer them, and how many of them there will be. But, what about this question: should Qualifications Wales be an awarding body as well, as far as, say, GCSEs and A-levels are concerned?

[97] **Ann Jones:** But that's not on the face of this Bill. This committee was quite clear, when we looked at the pre-legislation, that we suggested—. One of our main recommendations to the Minister was, 'Let's just get on and find the regulator, do the regulatory functions and then, perhaps, look at it later.' So, I think you've been a bit naughty there. [*Laughter.*] You don't have to answer a subjective point from there.

[98] **Mr Bennett:** [*Inaudible.*]

[99] **Ann Jones:** No, no. [*Laughter.*] I think we've made it our—

[100] **Keith Davies:** Sorry, Gareth.

[101] **Ann Jones:**—position quite clear. Sorry, Aled, did you have a point, before I come back to Simon?

[102] **Aled Roberts:** Ie, jest ar y pwynt— **Aled Roberts:** Yes, just on the point—

[103] **Ann Jones:** No, no; you're not mentioning his point again. [*Laughter.*] Go on, then.

[104] **Aled Roberts:** Jest ar y cyrsiau galwedigaethol, wrth gwrs, un o'r gwahaniaethau ar hyn o bryd ydy'r ffaith bod yna ddarpariaeth gynyddol trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ond mae yna wendidau yn dal i fod yn y system. Un o'r pwyntiau a wnaethpwyd gan Gareth Pierce yr wythnos diwethaf oedd ei fod o'n pryderu nad oedd yna ddim darpariaeth yn y Bil ei hun, o dan adran 45, i'r corff newydd yma wneud grantiau ar gyfer darpariaeth ddwyieithog. A oes gennych chi unrhyw bryderon wrth ystyried—? Roedd o'n dweud, hyd yn oed efo cyrsiau academaidd, fod rhan o'r ddarpariaeth ar hyn o bryd yn dibynnu ar y grantiau hynny. Os ydym ni'n sôn am system fasnachol heb y grantiau, mae'n debyg y buasai'r ddarpariaeth yn llawer iawn yn llai, neu buasai'r ddarpariaeth ddim ond yn cael ei wneud gan un corff— fuasai yna ddim cystadleuaeth.

Aled Roberts: Just in terms of vocational courses, of course, one of the differences at present is the fact that there is increasing provision through the medium of Welsh, but there are weaknesses or limitations still in the system. One of the points made by Gareth Pierce last week was that he was concerned that there was no provision in the Bill itself, under section 45, for this new body to issue grants for bilingual provision. Do you have any concerns considering—? He said, even with academic courses, that part of the provision depends at present on those grants. If we're talking about a commercial system without the grants, it's likely that provision will be a lot smaller, or that it would only be made by one body, because there would be no competition.

[105] **Dr Walker:** It's interesting, because the Bill does give a power to Qualifications Wales to commission qualifications, but, as you say, it doesn't appear very specifically to be able to award grants to facilitate the provision of those qualifications, and that may be something where the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales and providers will have to work together to try to make sure that, where there are deficiencies in the number of Welsh language qualifications available, we have to work together to make sure that provision is available. I'm not sure whether there is a general power—I don't think I spotted a general

power for Qualifications Wales in relation to encouraging provision. It may be something that lawyers may not very keen on drafting, or, indeed, Assembly Members may not be very keen on allowing a body like this very general powers in some areas, but it may be worth considering that as a potential amendment.

[106] **Aled Roberts:** And is the vocational sector much more dependent on grant funding in that way, before they will even consider—? Because, presumably, the market is even smaller as far as Welsh-language provision in the vocational sector is concerned.

[107] **Mr Bennett:** Yes, indeed it is, and to offer fully bilingual provision is extremely expensive. The issue is largely translation and the availability of professionals with bilingual skills to operate, and that will require the continuing provision of grants; there's no question of that.

[108] **Ann Jones:** We're still with you, Simon.

[109] **Simon Thomas:** Just on that point—but not necessarily from Qualifications Wales in this case?

[110] **Mr Bennett:** No.

[111] **Simon Thomas:** Some of us fought very hard not to ensure that this wasn't a Bill [*Inaudible.*—with awarding powers, so, we're not going down there. [*Laughter.*]

[112] **Ann Jones:** No.

[113] **Simon Thomas:** To finish the points I was making, however, looking at the recognition that we talked about around the plethora that was and still is available, and the need to rationalise that and the need to have an independent body that does that rationalisation, that's all fairly, sort of, accepted, I think, and set out on the face of the Bill in a rational way again. But when you get to the practical effects of the provisions in the Bill, they do seem to be potentially far-reaching in that, certainly, the Bill could, to open it out to universities as well, say that there is one English language GCSE available in Wales, or there is one Welsh language GCSE, and there is one maths—there are two maths exams, as it happens; so, there are two maths available in Wales. The provision on the vocational side could also become a lot more simplified in that way. At what stage does the competition, which you have said has been beneficial, sort of drop out of the frame, and at what stage does a monopoly come into the academic side that you would not find useful? Or do you have a fairly relaxed view and think that, as an independent body with the right level of staffing and professionalism, this is something that could be dealt with—with the board that has already been appointed with the right skill sets, this is not of concern to you?

[114] **Professor Grattan:** Do you want me to respond first?

[115] **Simon Thomas:** Yes.

[116] **Professor Grattan:** So, from the universities' perspective, I think we would welcome this. We would see it as an opportunity to smooth the gap, the jump, between school and university life. I think that would be very important, and we could really work closely with schools, but particularly work closely with the groups setting the curriculum to make sure that we've got not just subject-specific material but also skills material and that there is a sort of continuum from school all the way through to postgraduate work. So, we would certainly want to be consulted and to work closely with the people awarding, for instance, my own discipline, geography. This time last year I was evacuating the seafront in Aberystwyth, but that would make a fantastic project subject for Welsh students—climate change and climate

storminess; all that sort of thing. So, I would want that to go straight into the curriculum. At the moment, it's not, because the curriculum was set some time ago.

[117] So, I'd like to see that communication, those contacts, really, really facilitated, actually to allow us to be quite fleet of foot in changing the curriculum to really respond to the needs of Wales. I can see it working at schools close to each university. We're all close here, and there are some good examples of how this is working with the A-level in social analytics, where Cardiff University is working very closely with the WJEC. We need more of that. I think every A-level, every GCSE needs to work all the way through.

[118] **Simon Thomas:** So, this would strengthen universities' influence within the exam-setting process?

[119] **Professor Grattan:** It would, but I think it's to the benefit of the learners and it's to the benefit of the teachers, and frankly we benefit from encountering teachers, because they teach in a different way, and we all benefit from that.

[120] **Ann Jones:** I think Angela's got a point on this.

[121] **Angela Burns:** Well, yes, because this is so interesting, because that's a very positive view in looking at the curriculum, but, I mean, the National Association of Head Teachers and the Association of School and College Leaders, were very clear last week that they believe that QW's powers to prioritise qualifications potentially restrict them to a single form and amount to prescribing the curriculum. So, in other words, they fear that the curriculum is going to get narrower, whereas you think that this Bill might actually enable it to get a bit more robust, and I'd just like to tease that out a little bit, because they are quite diametrically opposed views.

[122] **Professor Grattan:** So, if I'm asked to be involved in the development of the geography curriculum for delivery within Wales, then we would work to ensure that it's exactly what I presented to you. I think there's an opportunity for us here. Yes, we could restrict it—

[123] **Simon Thomas:** Can we be clear? Are we talking about the curriculum or the syllabus?

[124] **Professor Grattan:** Oh, blimey.

[125] **Simon Thomas:** I'm being old-fashioned, but we've got the curriculum Donaldson review going on, and I think you are more, sort of, focusing on a syllabus there.

[126] **Angela Burns:** The curriculum was the point that NAHT and ASCL were making. They felt that this Bill could really constrict the development of a curriculum, which may impede a university or college that has come up with a particular thing that they would like to push into the curriculum from being able to do that.

[127] **Professor Grattan:** Well, I don't think it need be that. We can build that flexibility in; we can allow—. I don't see why we couldn't allow local staff to be flexible and to introduce local examples—I don't see why we shouldn't—to be able to respond to local needs, particularly.

[128] **Dr Walker:** We highlight in our evidence under paragraph 20—the third bullet point—about the importance of establishing a successful modus operandi between the curriculum-setting function of the Welsh Government and the regulation function of Qualifications Wales. It will be absolutely crucial, and key stage 4, obviously, is the highlight

of that, but that probably can't be written in successfully on the face of the Bill; I think that's going to have to be about relationships and protocols and things that are going to happen once the institution is in situ and working.

[129] **Angela Burns:** I don't disagree with you, Greg. I think the reason why I'm just trying to push it on a bit is that NAHT and ASCL described it as a fundamental flaw, which is actually really strong language to use about a piece of legislation.

[130] **Dr Walker:** OCR made some comments in their written evidence about schools.

[131] **Professor Grattan:** Is it a flaw or is it a risk that, having identified, we can mitigate and manage out?

[132] **Angela Burns:** Yes, thank you.

[133] **Ann Jones:** Sometimes, it is about language that we use.

[134] **Angela Burns:** Yes.

[135] **Ann Jones:** Simon, are you—.

[136] **Simon Thomas:** I have just one final point on all of this, because the other area where there's been some disagreement in evidence to the committee is around just how responsive this system could be, because the Minister has suggested that the right use of this proposed system could lead to a little bit of what John Grattan has been suggesting: a more flexible approach, and almost qualifications on demand, if you like—if, suddenly, you identify a need, then you can respond quite quickly to that need. I think, though I wasn't here for his evidence, that Gareth Pierce said something a little different from the WJEC, that, in fact, this legislation looked a bit too constrictive, particularly as regards these prioritisations and limitations. It wouldn't be that way, but it seems to me that you are looking to maximise the opportunity in the legislation in the evidence that you are giving.

[137] **Professor Grattan:** Yes, I think so. At university, each of our subjects is governed by a subject benchmark statement, which covers broadly what we're teaching. I think the opportunity to really link those into what the schools are offering all the way through is a positive thing; I really do. And that would mean perhaps changing what we do as well, and what we teach.

[138] **Simon Thomas:** You'd be playing a greater role than you currently can when it's all locked up in Welsh Government.

[139] **Ann Jones:** Okay? Right. Shall we move on to the strategic qualifications system? Suzy.

[140] **Suzy Davies:** I want to go back to my earlier question about the needs of learners in Wales and whether the strategic overview of this Bill is actually going to meet that need, and what you consider it to mean by 'the needs of learners in Wales'. Sorry, I haven't expressed that very well. What does that mean to you, that phrase?

[141] **Dr Walker:** I think it's probably set out in one of the early sections of the Bill—section 3(2), which runs through (a) to (h), as the key points, the key remits of the body, from promoting sustainable growth in the economy, promoting the Welsh language, the needs of employers, and consistency across the curriculum, and so on. I think they've set out quite well what the strategic understanding taken by the body should be when it comes into being. We've obviously asked to add a couple more points, as I've mentioned already in the

evidence, which are just as important as those listed there. So, I think if, after three or four years of operation, we can go down and tick every one of those letters of the alphabet in subsection (2) there, I think we can say that it's been a strategically successful organisation.

[142] **Suzy Davies:** From what you said earlier, you very much view both yourselves and, I'm sure, Universities Wales as being part of the design of how that will work, through this—well, 'modus operandi' were the words you used. Can you give us some sort of indication of what you think that modus operandi might look like, and the balance, or weighting, of the views that both of you are likely to—balancing views and the resulting influence that's likely to come from that? How influential are you going to be?

[143] **Dr Walker:** I think Amanda mentioned a few minutes ago that, so far, the process on the review of qualifications has been very inclusive, very stakeholder-involving. We've got confidence in the process as it has been thus far. I would hope that spirit of inclusion and collaboration would continue with Qualifications Wales.

10:15

[144] We've met, or I've met, with the chief executive, Philip Blaker, and I think that he exhibits the same qualities as Huw Evans in terms of the way in which he ran the independent review of qualifications. We would hope that the board members would keep Qualifications Wales honest in terms of that inclusion and that collaboration as well. I'm sure that, if that wasn't forthcoming, we'd be knocking on the door of Assembly Members to tell you that was the case.

[145] **Mr Bennett:** If I might add to that, I think another example downstream of the review is the design of the Welsh baccalaureate, which I think has been an exemplary process, which has included professionals in a very meaningful and very constructive way. So, in answer to your question, 'How influential would you be?', we'll be as influential as we're allowed to be, and I think that's right.

[146] **Suzy Davies:** [*Inaudible.*]—'As you're allowed to be'; I'm wondering who's going to be responsible for the allowing, if you see what I mean.

[147] **Professor Grattan:** You talked about opportunities for learners, and I think that's a key phrase. What we're doing here, and I think it's really important to remember that, is—. Education is about allowing people to find out what they're good at and to become wonderful at it, and, at the moment, not everybody is doing as well at education as they should do at the right stage of their life. You might not be ready at 18, and so on. I didn't go to university until I was 26 years old. Before that, I was a motorcycle courier in London, delivering parcels. I have an amazing job now, and I got that because I had the opportunity to go to university with non-standard qualifications. At the heart of it, that's what we're about. So, this will help us do that, and this will help people from diverse backgrounds, who may not have thought about continuing education when they were at school, when they're in their twenties and thirties, with finding the right qualification, getting the opportunity to say, 'Yes, I can do this; I'd like to do more'. So, I think, strategically, this is what it's about. I feel in my heart that this is something that's going to be good for us.

[148] **Simon Thomas:** Your sense of geography was always very good, then. [*Laughter.*]

[149] **Professor Grattan:** It was; I can find my way around. I couldn't find my way around Cardiff last night, because every road seemed to be shut. [*Laughter.*]

[150] **Simon Thomas:** That's the engineering works.

[151] **Suzy Davies:** [*Inaudible.*]—engineering should be a priority. [*Laughter.*]

[152] Amanda mentioned earlier that she was confident that this would raise all boats, effectively, and that the quality of what should emerge under this Bill should be exemplary, with a ‘reaching for the stars’ sort of approach to things. ColegauCymru in particular mentioned parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications. If you’re raising all boats and yet the perception of equality doesn’t exist, how do you think this Bill will raise the perception of the quality of vocational qualifications more quickly to reach the sort of element of parity, because that’s obviously a strategic aim of this Bill?

[153] **Ms Wilkinson:** That’s a big question. For us, we have to be engaged at the European level, internationally, we have to be clear, you know, for all our qualifications, where they sit on those big frameworks, and the European qualification is the example. In general in the community, we have far less of a problem saying how wonderful systems are elsewhere—Germany have great vocational qualifications. Well, let’s map ours. Let’s be clear; let’s use this body to be absolutely clear about the relative quality of our qualifications. That is a really good start for us, I think, in relation to all of this, because we have this very internal debate about where they sit. Well, let’s just be clear where they sit and, you know, let’s be confident about going through that process.

[154] **Suzy Davies:** So, that catch-up, you think, could happen fairly quickly as a result of this Bill? As I said, if you’re raising all boats, you don’t want to just raise all the boats with the disparity still there.

[155] **Dr Walker:** I think it would be unfair to load all of this onus on Qualifications Wales. I think parity of esteem issues are societal and cultural issues—Government, colleges, awarding bodies, parents and employers all have a joint responsibility to try to correct some of the misperceptions, which are long-standing misperceptions. They don’t just exist in the UK, incidentally. The British Council had a very successful skills seminar with colleagues from the vocational education and training sector last week in Cardiff bay, and this is an issue in Nepal, this is an issue in Indonesia. So, this is something we need to work together on for the long term, but I think it should be in the Bill.

[156] **Suzy Davies:** I think that’s a very fair response. Thank you.

[157] **Ann Jones:** Are you okay?

[158] **Suzy Davies:** Yes.

[159] **Ann Jones:** Financial and commercial issues, Aled.

[160] **Aled Roberts:** Diolch. Mae’r memorandwm esboniadol yn sôn am gynnydd o ryw £15.7 miliwn yn ystod y pum mlynedd cyntaf. Rwy’n meddwl eich bod chi, yn eich tystiolaeth, ColegauCymru a Prifysgolion Cymru, yn dweud eich bod chi eisiau sicrhau gwerth am arian. Rwy’n meddwl ei fod yn deg eich bod yn dweud eich bod yn credu bod yna le i’r Llywodraeth allu cyfiawnhau’r cynnydd yma yn y gwariant, ond rydych hefyd yn dweud y dylen ni, fel pwyllgor a Chynulliad, graffu ar faint y cynnydd a herio hynny. A oes gennych chi unrhyw sylw ar faint y cynnydd? A ydych yn cwestiyu

Aled Roberts: Thank you. The explanatory memorandum mentions an increase of about £15.7 million during the first five years. I think that, in your evidence, ColegauCymru and Universities Wales, you say that you want to ensure value for money. I think it’s fair to say that you think there is room for the Government to be able to justify this increase in expenditure, but you also say that we, as a committee and an Assembly, should scrutinise the size of the increase and challenge it. Do you have any comments to make on the increase? Do you question anything in relation to the basis of the

unrhyw fath o sail o ran y memorandwm explanatory memorandum at all?
esboniadol o gwbl?

[161] **Dr Walker:** We did express in the later parts—paragraphs 24, 25 and 26—of our written evidence some concern about the, effectively, almost £3 million a year additional costs of qualification in Wales compared to one of the viable options, as they describe it in the explanatory memorandum, which would be just a basic commissioner role. That is quite a lot more money than the current system. I think there does need to be scrutiny of that. We've suggested that maybe the Wales Audit Office could have a look at those figures. Obviously, the college sector is particularly acutely aware of the tightness of the Department for Education and Skills budget—of the Welsh Government budget on education—at the moment. We'd only presume that this £3 million a year would have to come from other parts of the education budget. So, yeah, absolutely strict scrutiny, I would suggest, for every additional penny that is suggested to be spent on Qualifications Wales. But, at the same time, we don't want to hamstring this organisation; we don't want to short-change it. There are additional functions that we're expecting the body to discharge, so there will be some increase in budget, of course, for the new organisation, compared to what is currently being done. So, we're not penny pinching in that respect, but, certainly, you know, we would not want £3 million to needlessly disappear from other aspects of the education budget, let's put it that way.

[162] **Professor Grattan:** I wouldn't want to see this body building up reserves from these funds, but I think that we're asking it to do something that's quite expensive, certainly in its first few years, and we need to support it to do that. If we starve it of funding as it sets up, then we're not going to achieve what we want to achieve from it. Obviously, we have to closely scrutinise budgets, but talk to colleagues in Scotland and talk to colleagues in Northern Ireland, who've been through this process already, to get a clear view of how much it does cost.

[163] **Dr Walker:** And the commercial functions—. The Bill allows commercial functions for the organisation, and, you know, organisations like the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, and other organisations that are not, strictly speaking, Government bodies, have done very well in getting commercial income. We would hope that Qualifications Wales would quickly get a reputation on qualifications that could enable it to sell its services successfully to other bodies, and, therefore, cross-subsidise what's required from the taxpayer.

[164] **Mr Bennett:** If I may just reinforce those answers, I mean, clearly, Wales wants better qualifications, better designed for the needs of people of Wales, that are more innovative and evidence based—that is going to cost money. For me, the issue is not so much that—it's where it comes from. If this means a significant further squeeze on the education budget, then that will be a big issue for us. For next year, for example, out of the further education budget, £18 million is coming, which is an interesting comparison. That means that, in colleges like mine, 50% of our part-time provision will disappear.

[165] **Ann Jones:** I think the Minister's been quite clear—or, certainly, I think the Minister for finance has been quite clear, that this has to be—. The cost of legislation is an issue that, as Aled's alluded to, the Assembly scrutiny committees look at, but I think that the Minister's made it clear that it will come from his existing budget. So, I think you're right to flag up the fact that, if it comes from the existing budget, there's got to be the hit somewhere, hasn't there? And if it's not in the sector there, it's going to be somewhere else. So, I mean, you know, I know what you're saying, but I think that's going to be the issue that we have to put our heads around, and look at whether—. I think that what Mr Grattan's just said there is that it's about whether, if we're asking people to do it, then—. I think that you've both alluded to the fact that, if we ask them to do it, we've got to give them the tools, which include the financial tools, to do it, but, by the same token, there are ever-mounting pressures.

[166] **Mr Bennett:** But if doing this costs 50% of the part-time provision in FE colleges in Wales—

[167] **Ann Jones:** Absolutely, yes.

[168] **Mr Bennett:** —then the whole notion, the whole concept, of value for money takes on a different colour.

[169] **Ann Jones:** Yes, true.

[170] **Dr Walker:** I'm struck, Chair, by John's own experience of education, and it's exactly his experience—[*Inaudible.*]—things that wouldn't, necessarily, be available in future years to retrain and get back into education through another route.

[171] **Ann Jones:** Absolutely, yes. John.

[172] **Professor Grattan:** This is normal for us. The QAA do this for universities and we all do pay a subscription to facilitate that function, that service. And, as the QAA's grown, now it's taking its expertise overseas and people are paying for it. So, it's not—. This could be a model to follow. It's relatively modest, but it assures that we want we do is unquestioned worldwide, and I think that's important.

[173] **Ann Jones:** Amanda, do you—?

[174] **Ms Wilkinson:** I assume that we would be looking at some saving in running costs and current arrangements from all of this as well, surely. Certainly that's what we would expect to see.

[175] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf ofyn ar—? Rydych wedi cyfeirio at adran 40, rwy'n meddwl, sy'n rhoi'r hawl i'r corff newydd yma ddarparu gwasanaethau ar sail fasnachol. Wrth gwrs, rydych yn iawn i ddweud eich bod yn pryderu am arian yn dod, fel yr oedd y Cadeirydd yn ei ddweud, o'r gyllideb addysg ar hyn o bryd. Mae adran 40 yn rhoi'r hawl i'r corff yma ddenu arian ychwanegol i mewn, hwyrach i osgoi gofynion ar y gyllideb adran addysg. Ond roedd Gareth Pierce wythnos diwethaf yn dweud hwyrach bod yna broblemau posib o wrthdaro lle mae'r corff newydd yma yn masnachu, neu'n darparu gwasanaethau masnachu ar gyfer cyrff dyfarnu, ac eto, ar ôl hynny, yn gyfrifol am eu rheoleiddio nhw. A ydych chi'n ymwybodol o'r sefyllfa yn Lloegr neu Ogledd Iwerddon, lle mae ganddynt yr hawl masnachu yma? A oes yna unrhyw fath o bryderon ynglŷn â gwrthdaro yn y sefyllfa yna?

Aled Roberts: Could I ask on—? You've referred to section 40, I think, that gives the right to this new body to provide services on a commercial basis. Of course, you're right to say that you're concerned about funding coming, as the Chair was saying, from the education budget at the moment. Section 40 gives the right to this body to attract additional funds, perhaps to avoid pressures on the education department's budget. But Gareth Pierce last week said that there are perhaps possible problems of conflict where this new body was commercialising services, or providing commercial services for awarding bodies, yet, after that, was responsible for regulating them. Are you aware of the situation in England or Northern Ireland, where they have this commercial right? Do you have any concerns about conflict in those sorts of circumstances?

[176] **Dr Walker:** I think it would be—. I would imagine the focus of the services that would be provided would be beyond Wales, but it could be that they would also want to look—

[177] **Aled Roberts:** They're not limited, though, to beyond Wales. They could be in Wales.

[178] **Dr Walker:** That's right. And I think, with the example of QAA, UCAS and other agencies who have successfully commercialised some of their services and some of their expertise, it would be reasonable for clause 40 to remain in the Bill. I think then, when the body gets up and running, it will have to clearly establish protocols as to what would be acceptable commercial activity and what would conflict with its core functions. So that would be something the board would have to monitor clearly.

[179] **Aled Roberts:** So, you're not aware of any limitations in the other jurisdictions, then, on commercial activities within the same territory that they are maintaining regulatory functions over.

[180] **Dr Walker:** I'm afraid not.

[181] **Aled Roberts:** Okay.

[182] A gaf jest godi un pwynt arall? Roedd CBAC hefyd yn pryderu bod gan Cymwysterau Cymru y pŵer i godi tâl ar gyrff dyfarnu, ac roedden nhw'n dweud, o achos bod y cyrff dyfarnu yna yn gweithredu ar lefel masnachol, mai'r peth fyddai'n digwydd, mae'n debyg, yw y byddai'r ffioedd yn cael eu pasio ymlaen i ysgolion a cholegau. Rwy'n meddwl bod yr undebau hefyd wedi codi pryder ynglŷn â hynny. Mae'n debyg na fyddai'r colegau chwaith yn croesawu y fath symudiad, wrth ystyried y toriadau yr ydych chi'n eu wynebu ar hyn o bryd. I just want to raise one further point. The WJEC was also concerned that Qualifications Wales had the power to charge awarding bodies, and they said that, because those awarding bodies were operating on a commercial level, that what would happen, probably, is that the fees would be passed on to schools and colleges. I think the unions also raised concerns about that. It's likely that the colleges would also not welcome such a move, given the cuts that you're facing at the moment.

[183] **Mr Bennett:** Yes, absolutely, we wouldn't welcome it. Things cost money. Really, to refer back to my previous point, the issue here is where it's going to come from. The point about commercial activity and Qualifications Wales is that that would enable it to raise funding on a commercial basis for itself rather than simply have everything directly funded by the Government, and I think that would be sensible.

[184] **Professor Grattan:** The accrediting bodies, I'm sure, are charging a fee, so it's perfectly reasonable, I think, for some of that to be vired to Qualifications Wales to pay for its activities. That is exactly, if you think, what we're doing with the Quality Assurance Agency.

[185] **Aled Roberts:** But what they were suggesting was that Qualifications Wales would charge them a fee, and that an additional fee would then be passed on to the schools and colleges as far as examination entries were concerned. Is there any evidence of that?

[186] **Dr Walker:** It would depend on the level of those fees and whether they were simply for covering the costs of Qualifications Wales for certain functions that WJEC may have to be doing in any case. So, I think, again, that would be something that would have to be dealt with when the body's established, and—

[187] **Aled Roberts:** Could you provide us with any evidence with regard to the relative fee levels that you experience compared with, say, your colleagues in Scotland or Northern Ireland?

10:30

[188] **Dr Walker:** We could; I'm sure we could try to make a stab at that. That table will obviously depend on the volumes and the members, and the qualifications in Scotland are quite different, as you know.

[189] **Ann Jones:** Okay, are we happy? Have Members got any more points? No. All right, thank you very much. I think we've covered all the points that we wanted to raise, and thank you very much for that. You know we send you a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy, in case we've transcribed anything that you didn't really say, because I know that's published as part of the Stage 1 proceedings. Thank you all very much; I think the Members have gained quite a lot from that. Thanks very much for that. Committee, shall we break until 10.40 a.m.?

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:31 a 10:44.
The meeting adjourned between 10:31 and 10:44.*

Bil Cymwysterau Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 5 Qualifications Wales Bill—Evidence Session 5

[190] **Ann Jones:** Right. If everybody's okay, we'll move on to the next item on the agenda, which is to continue taking evidence for the Qualifications Wales Bill. Our next panel of witnesses to give us some evidence come from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; Oxford Cambridge and RSA, OCR; and Edexcel (Pearson). So, do you all want to introduce yourselves for the record, because it is legislation? Then, if you're okay, we'll go into some questions.

[191] **Mr Richardson:** I'm Derek Richardson. I'm director of qualifications development and assessment at Edexcel (Pearson).

[192] **Ann Jones:** Right.

[193] **Mr McGlade:** And I'm Paul McGlade. I'm the national manager for OCR for Ireland and Wales.

[194] **Ann Jones:** Okay.

[195] **Mr Edwards:** I'm Justin Edwards. I'm the chief executive of CCEA.

[196] **Ms Duffy:** And I'm Anne-Marie Duffy, director of qualifications for CCEA, which is the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland.

10:45

[197] **Ann Jones:** Thanks ever so much for those, and thank you very much for coming to give us evidence. We've had the written papers, so if it's okay with you, we'll just go straight into some questions. Okay. Thanks. Participation in Wales is the first set. John.

[198] **John Griffiths:** Yes, thank you, Chair. We're interested in the role of awarding bodies in Wales, you know, to what extent they currently provide qualifications in Wales. So, could you provide us with some information on that please, to begin with?

[199] **Mr McGlade:** Could I maybe just start off? One of the points that was raised around the participation of Wales was about the Welsh Government's analysis that awarding bodies

had stepped back from offering qualifications in Wales. I think the first point that I want to make is that they've not so much stepped back but, possibly, pushed away from some of the marketplace for general qualifications; I need to make that point very clear. The market that we have for Wales for general qualifications in Wales would have been about a third of our business in Wales. So, two thirds of our business is within the vocational market. So, we're very much still within Wales, offering those qualifications. So, I just wanted to make that point, that we haven't really stepped away from the Welsh market, that we're still very much operating within Wales and here for the learners.

[200] **Mr Edwards:** If I—. May I? Chair, I think that the context of my organisation is slightly different, as the panel may be aware. I'm a non-departmental public body for Northern Ireland under the Department for Education. Really, our involvement in Wales is very small—we actually only had 55 registrations in the last cycle. But, our involvement with Wales is maybe for another purpose, and that's to allow us to compare and contrast our products in different environments, looking at how they work, and then bring that learning back to Northern Ireland, or if we can share learning from Northern Ireland back into the Welsh system through our qualifications. So, the motives and the drivers for us are quite different—engagement is still important, but it's engagement where it does reward back into the wider organisation and the learning we can take.

[201] **Mr Richardson:** We have 400 centres taking qualifications with us in Wales. The vast majority of those are actually taking vocational qualifications, rather than general qualifications. Around 39 centres just take academic qualifications with us. We offer the full range of qualifications that you would expect, right through from entry level through to Higher Nationals, and cover BTECs, ESOL and NVQs—so, the full range of qualifications that you would expect us to offer.

[202] **John Griffiths:** Okay, just picking up on 'stepping back'—whether there has been stepping back or not. We heard from the Minister that perhaps one issue was the requirement for collaboration—that that potentially made it less attractive to offer qualifications in Wales. Do you have a view on that?

[203] **Mr Richardson:** So, for us it's about the conditions that are in place and the risks that are associated with them. At the time when those discussions were taking place, the conditions around how the development would take place weren't that clear, and the conditions around what would happen after they'd been developed—in other words, how they would be operated—weren't that clear. That was at the same time as discussions were taking place in England about changes and reform of qualifications there. So, we had to consider, given the size of the entry for us in Wales, and the changes that we'd be operating, with different qualifications and a very low number of entries—. That, in turn, creates issues with standard-setting and the statistical information would be very low. So, we'd be trying to compare two different structures of qualifications with very limited data available to us, if we were still there. So, we had to balance those things that were in place. That's why we took the decision that we wouldn't continue, and that's why we support the decision that it was right for WJEC to take that work forward.

[204] **Mr McGlade:** From the OCR's point of view, I think we were in a very similar position. Whenever we were considering those options of being part of the development for GCSE, and then subsequently the GCE market, we very clearly made the decision that, operationally, the complexity of developing qualifications that would be for a Welsh-only market would be both operationally and commercially unwise for our organisation, moving forward. I think one of the points that we had to consider there was about where we should invest our efforts to best meet our charitable aims, because, while we are an awarding body, we do have charitable aims within that, with our association with Cambridge university. Therefore, we had to make some fundamental decisions and our decision was that we

wouldn't move forward with the development of GCSEs and A-levels.

[205] **Ann Jones:** I think, before you come back in, John, Suzy's got a point on this point.

[206] **Suzy Davies:** Yes. I just want to be clear on this, because you used a very deliberate phrase earlier on about being pushed away from this. Despite the words on the face of the Bill, you've obviously expressed concerns that, effectively, what you're looking at in Wales is going to be a closing market, in due course. Would that be fair? That is my first question. Then, to elaborate on that, is then the requirement for collaboration or desire for collaboration that was referred to in John's question realistic in any way at all?

[207] **Mr McGlade:** Just coming back to that first point about the market sort of closing in, as I've very clearly said, we've taken the decision not to move forward with GCSEs and A-levels, but I think I made the point clearly at the start of the discussion that two thirds of our market is within the vocational side of things. Some of the things that are now coming through, like, for example, the reporting post 2017, mean that schools will only be able to report back on science GCSE, which then removes the vocational product that we have, which is Cambridge Nationals in science. So, that reduces the options for your school learners. So, we have a range of Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals, which are our vocational option, that we make available to all schools, both maintained and independent, in Wales. Now, we're seeing that that market is being reduced even further because of some of those complex issues.

[208] **Suzy Davies:** Right. Yes.

[209] **Mr Richardson:** I think what I'd say is that it's very easy to make quite broad generalisations. Qualifications are so different and the purposes they serve are so different, it's important to differentiate between them. It's up to Qualifications Wales, really, what sort of environment it wants to create when it becomes operational as a regulator. We would very much hope that it doesn't narrow down the qualifications provision, particularly vocational, where the number of routes that students are going to after they achieve their qualifications is so broad and varied that we think it's right that there is more broad and varied provision in that area.

[210] **Mr McGlade:** If I could come back to your point on collaboration, I think that's one of the things that we're very clear about, that we are still within the Welsh market so that we can collaborate on any mechanism that we can. Just recently, we've been asked to agree in principle that we will still provide qualifications into Wales. They won't be Welsh-specific qualifications, but those qualifications that are designed for the English market in smaller entry subjects, like, for example, Latin, ancient Greek, and there are a number of other subjects. So, in principle, as an awarding organisation, we have agreed that we will still provide those qualifications because our understanding is that WJEC will not have those options available to the schools in Wales.

[211] **Suzy Davies:** So, in the less mainstream subjects—vocational and academic—that's where you see your future lying within Wales.

[212] **Mr McGlade:** Absolutely, and within the independent sector.

[213] **Suzy Davies:** Oh, right; okay, thank you.

[214] **Mr Edwards:** I think, from my perspective, and a combination of the two questions, if the framework for entry to Wales diversifies to such an extent that the migration of what I currently offer in Northern Ireland is very difficult to bring in or expensive to bring in, then I have to go back to the point of whether I want to be in that market for the benefit of sharing

practices between the two jurisdictions on the way through. So, it will be down, I think, to the collaboration between the accrediting bodies through the four nations involved, and their relationship, to make sure that the divergence isn't to such an extent that it does mean that it becomes too costly to exit and share out of markets. But I think that, where there is opportunity and where you're looking for providers who have experience, CCEA has experience around some very specific qualifications in some areas that might be of use to Wales in the future, because there's a specific need in Wales, and so we do need to still have that conversation with Qualifications Wales to make sure that what we're doing can be carried across easily and is cost-effective for everybody involved.

[215] **Suzy Davies:** That's very helpful; thank you.

[216] **Ann Jones:** Go on, then, Aled, but we're still on John's questions.

[217] **Aled Roberts:** Mae hwn yn ddilysiant o'r ateb a gawsom gan Mr McGlade, *really*. A ofynnwyd i bob un o'r cyrff dyfarnu, felly, i dderbyn yr egwyddor eu bod nhw'n dal yn cynnig arholiadau yng Nghymru, a beth ydy'r broses? A ydyw'n rhan o'r trafodaethau sy'n cymryd lle ar hyn o bryd rhwng y Llywodraeth a'r cyrff dyfarnu?

Aled Roberts: This follows on from the answer that we had from Mr McGlade, really. Have all of the awarding bodies, therefore, been asked to accept the principle that they still offer exams in Wales, and what's the process? Is it part of the discussions that are going on at present between the awarding bodies and the Government?

[218] **Mr McGlade:** Just before we came in, I had a discussion with Derek, and I'm of the belief that all the awarding organisations have been asked, in some shape or form, to agree in principle that we will still provide those qualifications. Over the past number of months, we've been asked to agree whether we were going to be involved in the development of GCSEs and then, subsequently, GCEs, and subsequently whether we were going to be collaborating and still providing smaller entry subjects. On the issue around the vocational qualifications market, the question hasn't been asked as such, but it's just taken for granted that we're at the stage where we will still be offering those qualifications.

[219] **Mr Richardson:** Similarly, we've been in earlier discussions in Wales around what qualifications we offer, and we have to think about what the technical rules are in the different jurisdictions before we can make those kinds of decisions. So, assuming that the technical rules are the same and that we can ensure that qualifications are comparable and portable, then we can continue to offer qualifications there. When those begin to differentiate, that makes our decision making harder in some of those areas.

[220] **Aled Roberts:** So, just so that I understand, are those discussions limited to the small-entry subjects, or is it a case of you saying, 'Right, well, this is the whole range of GCSE qualifications that are offered. Can you check which ones have a specification that may be similar in the different jurisdictions, and tell us which ones you would be offering?', or is it purely a list, where the Government sort of says, 'Well, we've got these small-entry subjects that the WJEC don't appear to be able or willing to provide. Can you indicate to us whether you'd be willing to do so?'

[221] **Mr McGlade:** Yes, there is that list available and it's basically from the introduction of tranche 1 and tranche 2 qualifications for the England market from September 2015, 2016 and 2017. I think the qualifications, then, that fit into that category of smaller entry subjects will be from 2017 onwards. From 2015, 2016, we will still be making some available because of the introduction of the tranche of qualifications. For example, for 2015, some of the ones that are being introduced across England and Wales are biology, business, chemistry and computer science. So, that will be the last year that schools in the maintained sector in Wales will be able to take any of those with the OCR, the Pearson Group or AQA.

[222] **Aled Roberts:** Because the specification is complicated—

[223] **Mr McGlade:** Because the specification is now going to be with WJEC. But, for the 2016 tranche, in some of those subject areas—geography, languages, religious studies, design and technology—schools in Wales will still be able to follow the OCR legacy specifications up until 2016. So, we have those categorised by subject area. Then, for the smaller entry subjects, it is from 2017 onwards.

[224] **Ann Jones:** John.

[225] **John Griffiths:** Final question, Chair. In terms of your future activity in Wales, would a move to a commissioning model, whereby you could compete to become the sole provider of a particular qualification, appeal to you—that prospect—and might that result in further activity within Wales?

[226] **Mr Richardson:** I would say, yes, it could well appeal to us, depending on what the nature of the procurement process was. As Pearson operates in jurisdictions around the world, on an international basis, we are constantly looking at what's available and deciding where to invest and where the conditions are right for us to offer qualifications that will give learners the right qualifications to take them forward. So, yeah, we'd definitely look at that.

[227] **Mr McGlade:** I think, from the OCR point of view, we're very clear about that sort of collaboration and working with Welsh Government to provide what we can. I believe that our intent to offer those smaller entry subjects is what we would be looking at. If there was a commissioning model in place, that would be something that we would consider at that stage, based on some of the complexities and technicalities around that. But, yes, it would be something that we would consider.

11:00

[228] **Mr Edwards:** From CCEA's perspective, we wouldn't be interested in a commissioning model. Being a non-departmental public body, we would work directly for the Northern Ireland Government. I think that our relationship maybe changes in that model, and it's maybe like a regulatory side in the relationship, with CCEA and Qualifications Wales on that side, where we can provide information and guidance across governments. That would be where we would provide support, but not as a commission.

[229] **Ann Jones:** Fine, thanks. Can we move on to the general approach to Wales's qualifications system, and the role of Qualifications Wales? Simon.

[230] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Rwy'n mynd i ofyn cwestiwn yn Gymraeg hefyd. Os caf i ofyn yn gyntaf ynglŷn â'r ffaith ein bod ni yn fan hyn yn sefydlu system cymwysterau annibynnol yng Nghymru am y tro cyntaf, a jest cael eich barn yn gyffredinol am botensial y system yna i gywiro neu unioni'r cymwysterau yng Nghymru fel y maen nhw, a sicrhau bod cymwysterau yng Nghymru yn rhai sy'n gallu cael eu trosglwyddo a mudo yn rhyngwladol, felly, yn enwedig tu hwnt i ffiniau Cymru. Sut mae'r cymwysterau hynny wedyn yn cymharu â'r cymwysterau sydd ar gael yng **Simon Thomas:** Thank you, Chair. I'll be asking my questions through the medium of Welsh as well. If I could ask first about the fact that we are here establishing an independent qualifications system in Wales for the first time, and just have your views generally on the potential of that system to correct or align qualifications in Wales as they are, and ensure that qualifications in Wales are ones that are portable and comparable, especially on an international level, beyond the borders of Wales. How do those qualifications compare with the qualifications available in the rest of the UK

ngweddill Prydain, gweddill Ewrop a thu hwnt? and also in the rest of Europe, and beyond?

[231] Yn y cyd-destun hwnnw, yr un cwestiwn yw e, ond byddwn i'n licio cael barn, efallai persbectif bach yn wahanol, gan y byrddau arholi a gan y corff yng Ngogledd Iwerddon, achos un o'r rhinweddau ac un o'r pethau diddorol yng Ngogledd Iwerddon, yn aml iawn, yw bod yna gyrff yn bodoli o hyd yng Ngogledd Iwerddon sydd wedi cael eu hysgubo ymaith yng ngweddill y Deyrnas Gyfunol. Wrth gwrs, rydych chi'n debyg i gorff a oedd unwaith, 10 mlynedd yn ôl, ar gael yng Nghymru, sef y corff cwricwlwm ac asesu yma yng Nghymru, a oedd yn debyg iawn i'r corff sydd o hyd yng Ngogledd Iwerddon. Felly, o'r ddau bersbectif yna, beth yw rhinweddau sefydlu corff annibynnol fel hwn? Beth yw'r sialensiau? Sut allech chi wneud yn siŵr bod y cymwysterau sydd gennym ni yng Nghymru yn rhai sydd yn cael eu trosglwyddo, a'u deall, a'u cymathu, trwy Brydain a thu hwnt?

In that context, it's the same question, but I'd like to have the views, or perhaps a different perspective, from the examination bodies and the body in Northern Ireland, because one of the merits and one of the interesting things in Northern Ireland is that bodies still exist in Northern Ireland that have been swept away in other areas of the United Kingdom. You're similar to a body that was available here in Wales about 10 years ago, when we had the curriculum and assessment body here in Wales, which was very similar to the body that still exists in Northern Ireland. So, from those two perspectives, what are the merits of establishing an independent body like this? What are the challenges? How could you ensure that the qualifications that we have in Wales are ones that are portable and are understood and assimilated throughout the United Kingdom and beyond?

[232] **Mr Edwards:** Thank you very much for the question. I think, from a Northern Ireland perspective, yes, there are some interesting opportunities and interesting challenges. CCEA in Northern Ireland develops and publishes the qualifications standards and then accredits awarding organisations in the Northern Ireland market, but, as you may be aware, Northern Ireland has chosen to have its own approaches to some of those qualifications, but still retain an open market. So—

[233] **Simon Thomas:** That's not very different to the proposal here, is it?

[234] **Mr Edwards:** No, and that, at the moment, is working well. CCEA has an awarding organisation arm, represented here today by Anne-Marie, and that awarding organisation fulfils qualifications and spaces in meeting what is set by the Minister as policy in terms of the direction of the curriculum. But, it still allows innovation to come in from the open market, and for the demand and the supply side to choose the opportunities that the open market presents. The classic question on the disadvantages is: how do you keep an almost quasi-regulation function in-house with an awarding organisation? For me, those two points only meet at my role. Within the rest of the organisation, the regulatory team do not meet with the awarding body team to discuss product development or standards; they meet actually to ensure that the standards are being met by the awarding organisation, and actually applying the same criteria and the same rigor as we would to an open market provider in that sense. It is only through governance and transparency that we're then giving assurance back to the public that we are continuing to maintain those standards in Northern Ireland. We've received many freedom of information requests for that transparency and openness, but actually it works very well, because you can actually give assurances on standards.

[235] To come to the second point in your question, which was about comparability and transportability, it's, you know, a common question in Northern Ireland, and it's working between the regulatory authorities or accreditation authorities across the four nations to share practice, to share understanding of those standards, and to work with the bodies. I realise that, in a previous hearing, you talked about UCAS, and the role of UCAS in having a relationship

with my regulatory function. It's very, very important to make sure that those standards are maintained, and if there are issues, to come together as four nations to discuss where those issues lie and how we can make amendments to it. So, from a Northern Ireland perspective, it's working well.

[236] **Ann Jones:** Sorry, carry on—

[237] **Simon Thomas:** Can I just pursue—

[238] **Ann Jones:** You pursue that, and then—

[239] **Simon Thomas:** I just want to pursue with you, before we have the awarding bodies in, the further points around portability and comparability, because you were very clear about how you work, and we are also clear that, in this Bill, we separated out those two functions, and one is remaining elsewhere, as it were, so that Qualifications Wales is not an awarding body, though that was the original proposal, and this committee might have had something to do with that. Nevertheless, your market is even smaller than the Welsh market, and sometimes we're told that the Welsh market is too small to allow this kind of complete competition, and therefore there are steps within the Bill to prioritise qualifications, perhaps take qualifications from one provider and so forth. Have you used that approach at all in Northern Ireland, and, if you have done, how has it impacted, if at all, on the portability and the understanding of Northern Ireland qualifications?

[240] **Mr Edwards:** I think the two—. If I can give three examples, there were three examples recently that have required us to ensure the portability. The first was that, in Northern Ireland, we decided to retain at AS/A2 level the component of science that would be the practical component. Again, working with UCAS and working with higher education institutions, and working with industry in Northern Ireland, we were able to bring in information to actually support and justify the direction of travel that we took, but actually had the confidence within the system that we could still cope with that and it would still provide portability outside Northern Ireland. The second example, maybe, is that we are the sole provider of Irish language qualifications and making sure that those could be used outside the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland and still fit frameworks outside if people wanted to participate in that programme. So, again, you're looking at other standards, other regulatory organisations and their frameworks and trying to meet those standards on the way through. I think that the third and most significant example is the decision by the Minister in Northern Ireland to remain with AS and A2—

[241] **Simon Thomas:** Very similar to the Welsh decision.

[242] **Mr Edwards:** —making sure that we have comparability and transportability. But again, it's working with higher education institutions, working with UCAS, working with employers, right the way throughout the development of those frameworks that actually gives confidence before you release the framework in the transportability on the way through. So, we have plenty of examples in place where we've managed to sustain that component part.

[243] **Simon Thomas:** And do you actively map those qualifications on the European frameworks that we were told about in earlier evidence?

[244] **Mr Edwards:** Yes, we work to the European qualifications framework. We have a team that looks at how we map directly back to that. We still work with other regulatory bodies to actually submit our marks and standards, to look at comparability of our outcomes of our qualifications and feed that back through to make sure the standards that we're offering are the same or, if we need to make adjustments, we make adjustments then, as required.

[245] **Ann Jones:** Before we come to—. I know Angela and Aled have been—

[246] **Simon Thomas:** There are several threads running at the same time now.

[247] **Ann Jones:** Yes. I'll come back to you, Simon. So, Angela and then Aled.

[248] **Angela Burns:** I'd just like to tease out a little bit more your comments about conflict of interest and the management of it, and you say that you work together extremely well to ensure that that conflict of interest doesn't happen between the accreditation, the regulation and the awarding. But I would posit, if you work that closely together, does that not in and of itself dilute the regulation and accreditation function, because you are so close together and therefore have that impact on standards, which I think OCR quite clearly think you might have?

[249] **Mr Edwards:** I think that, in terms of the reference to working closely together, we work closely as professionals but don't necessarily always, between the teams, share the same opinion, which is good. You actually have collaborative tension within the organisation. My view is that, if it comes down to a discussion between a regulatory or a standards issue versus a qualification output issue, and that discussion happens internally, I will fall on the side of the regulatory component—or the accreditation component; sorry, I should use that terminology—because it's the accreditation component that really sets the standards for the external environment and the open market as well. But it does allow, I think, a rapid pace where you have both functions and you have those terms and conditions that we will always come back to: what were the standards and what standards did we agree? And the awarding organisation must meet those standards. If we keep coming back to that, it does allow us to move at pace. So, for example, at the moment, in Northern Ireland, we are revising our GCE A-level curriculum, and it does require re-looking at the standards, developing new awarding organisational products at the same time. The standards develop ahead of the awarding organisation, but it allows conversation: 'How do we interpret the standards?', 'Does that fit within the standards?', so that, before the product comes to market, it is already reaching towards those standards, and so, when we get it to market, the user and the purchaser is very assured of the nature of the product. So, it has benefits—it does have disagreements—and it's just making a call, at my level, on those disagreements, in favour of the standards, if it's required.

[250] **Ann Jones:** Aled, I know that we've got to come to Mr McGlade, but Aled on this point, and then we'll get the rest of the answers.

[251] **Aled Roberts:** Rydych chi wedi cyfeirio at y ffaith bod yna benderfyniad yng Ngogledd Iwerddon i ddiogelu'r farchnad agored, ond fel roedd Simon yn dweud, mae'r farchnad yn y gogledd yn llai, hyd yn oed, na'r farchnad yma. Felly, a oes yna dystiolaeth bod 'camu yn ôl' wedi digwydd yn yr un ffordd, a'ch bod chi wedi gadael y farchnad yn agored, ond bod y farchnad yna wedi troi ei chefn arnoch chi, ac mae eich corff arfarnu chi, hwyrach, mewn sefyllfa i gael monopoli mewn rhai sefyllfaoedd?

Aled Roberts: You've referred to the fact that there was a decision in Northern Ireland to safeguard the open market, but, as Simon said, the market in the north is even smaller than this market. So, is there evidence that 'stepping back' has happened in the same way, and that you've left the market open, but that the market has turned its back on you, and your awarding body is in a position to have a monopoly in certain situations?

[252] **Mr Edwards:** I think it is early stages of the decision. CCEA as an awarding organisation currently serves about 74% of the Northern Ireland market with its products. That market percentage hasn't grown, at date, so I would actually say we've retained the status quo at this particular point. I am, as I pointed out, a not-for-profit NDPB. I don't have a

commercial interest; what I have interest in is providing products that are right for the learner in Northern Ireland, and actually meeting the Minister's policies. So, it's not a driver to moving to that monopoly position—the open market is still working at the moment.

[253] **Ann Jones:** Okay, we need to come back to the first question that Simon posed, and then, what Mr Edwards just said then excited Angela and Aled. So, I've got Mr McGlade, and then Mr Richardson. Can you remember that initial first question, or do you want Simon—

[254] **Mr McGlade:** I think, going back to the individual qualification system and comparability and portability, I think I'll maybe deal with that from the OCR point of view. I think one of the things that I said in my submission was that we are of the opinion that

[255] 'qualifications solely for Wales will result in issues of comparability and transferability'.

[256] Our research would indicate that that would be a premise that we would like to, sort of, give evidence on. I think one of the things, without disagreeing with some of the things that Justin has said—but, we're in a changing environment at the moment, and my knowledge of OCR operating within the Northern Ireland environment, as well as in Wales, and I'm listening to some of our schools coming back to me who have concerns about the changes that are moving forward, about the concerns that in Northern Ireland we will have a model of modular GCSEs and A-levels, with the AS coupled with the A2. And then, we have the English boards—OCR, Pearson, AQA—coming in, and some of those changes are different, and the grading within GCSE is different at this stage. Some of the school principals have expressed their concern to me about the portability of qualifications—not necessarily right today, but possibly in two, three and four years down the line, and the portability of those qualifications, moving forward, for very young people who maybe want to get into some of the English and, potentially, Welsh universities. So, we have those concerns, and I think that's something that I just wanted to make sure that I let you know from the OCR point of view today.

[257] Moving on just to some of those other issues that were talked about, about sort of safeguarding that open market, I think you made a point, Aled, about stepping back. The OCR, because we have our Minister's policy decision, has left that open marketplace. We, very clearly, operate within a small marketplace within Northern Ireland. We haven't stepped back from it, and we still are able to provide all of our general GCSEs, A-levels and vocational offer. There are a number of restrictions that the Minister's imposed. One of those restrictions is on English language GCSE, because he has asked for speaking and listening to be in the final grade, and that is one of the restrictions. The second restriction we're experiencing at the moment is with A-level sciences. Our Minister would like to have the practical element of science GCSE within the final grade outcome. That is different from the developments within England so we have to make decisions on how we're going to address that marketplace. So, there are some things there

11:15

[258] **Ann Jones:** Go on then, Aled; we're not getting really far with Simon's questions.

[259] **Aled Roberts:** Isn't there a bit of a dilemma though here for us in Wales, if we actually, as a matter of principle, disagree with the direction of travel in England, certainly as far as non-modular courses are concerned, AS level? Would the open market in that situation dictate that we have to follow a policy here, dictated upon us by market considerations in the large neighbour, which we, and professionals in our country, as well as politicians, might fundamentally disagree with?

[260] **Simon Thomas:** Or the English professionals disagree with that. [*Laughter.*]

[261] **Mr McGlade:** I think we are in a situation that we have to develop based on what we've been set within the English market, yes, and that was coming back, I think, to the first point that I and Derek made, that we are in a situation that it would be commercially and operationally not viable to operate and provide within a Welsh market Welsh-only qualifications. So, yes, in answer to that question, you would be put down a path of qualifications that are designed for the English market within Wales.

[262] **Mr Richardson:** It's right that Wales decides what qualifications it wants for its students in Wales, and portability needn't be an issue; there are lots of examples of students in lots of jurisdictions around the world, and in Europe, that take those qualifications and use them in different—. And it's up to higher education and UCAS to determine whether or not those qualifications are suitable for the courses that they are going to take them to. So, it needn't be an issue. I think the complexity that we've got between England, Northern Ireland and Wales is that the qualifications that learners are gaining actually carry the same title. So, it could lead to some confusion with end users of the qualifications as to: 'Well, what have I got here?' 'What's the standard of the qualification?' 'How do I know what the learner's able to do?' 'Is it going to be right for my course?' So, it's not necessarily an insurmountable hurdle, but it's one that will need careful consideration and communication around what the standards and what the outcomes of those qualifications are, and work across the organisations to make sure that the standards are actually comparable where they carry the same title.

[263] So, the other distinction I draw there is with vocational qualifications, where, actually, portability could begin to be an issue if qualifications are designed purely with one jurisdiction in mind. Our research shows that a large number of learners are moving from Wales into England, so particularly where qualifications assign a licence to practice, for example, I think it would cause issues for people from Wales if they're not then able to transport those qualifications across different borders.

[264] **Ann Jones:** Simon, you're still on your first question. [*Laughter.*]

[265] **Simon Thomas:** Yeah, and a lot of others have already been incredibly brazen, in answer to that. But I'll just follow up, if I may, with the exam bodies on one particular thing, which is the principle in this Bill that the new body would be able, in effect, to commission one provider. So, particularly I think, OCR probably provides sort of general subjects in Wales at the moment that may not be able to be provided in the future. Is that something that you've in any sense worked through, because when you responded earlier to Aled Roberts around the less-used subjects, if you like, it sort of begged the question: is there, therefore, a list, and have you at all been party to a list of the subjects that, in effect, you will not be providing in Wales once this body is established—your English and maths, your general science and so forth? Is that the case at the moment?

[266] **Mr McGlade:** Absolutely. The decision that has been taken moving forward with tranche 1 and tranche 2 qualifications are the qualifications that will not be offered by OCR, the Pearson Group or AQA within Wales, and they are at first tranche 1 and tranche 2 subjects. So, we will not be offering those qualifications; that's a given at this stage.

[267] **Simon Thomas:** And is that an understanding at the moment, as the Bill hasn't been passed, rather than—? It's just a working assumption; would that be the right way to approach it, or have you been more or less told by Welsh Government?

[268] **Mr McGlade:** I think we've basically been—. We were asked to respond, and the letters went back to basically say that we weren't in a position to develop Welsh-only qualifications. So, we've made that formal statement.

[269] **Simon Thomas:** So, it's a two-way process.

[270] **Mr McGlade:** Yes.

[271] **Simon Thomas:** And you've been part of that, as such.

[272] **Mr McGlade:** Yes.

[273] **Simon Thomas:** Can I ask, therefore, perhaps a little more to CCEA now, because you've already given evidence as to why you think competition is a positive thing in this regard. You've also said that there was a decision taken in Northern Ireland to retain that open market. Having heard that, in effect, the open market, though, in the Welsh context, has to be quite limited, because we've already taken certain decisions about who offers what, is that the case also in Northern Ireland? And what advantages for the Northern Ireland examination system does retaining an open market have for you?

[274] **Mr Edwards:** I think that retention of the open market still allows, where awarding organisations fit our framework or want to be accredited within Northern Ireland—. It allows innovation to come into the market. It allows also a measure of ensuring value for money in terms of a cost perspective as well, making sure that CCEA charges for its examinations as well, making sure that, in comparator, CCEA delivers value for money. CCEA as an organisation isn't large enough necessarily to cover all the opportunities. We don't, for example, offer psychology and sociology at the moment, so we need an open market to facilitate those component parts, and, given constraints of budget constraints, or budget opportunities, we don't want to develop in all those opportunities on the way through. So, it allows innovation, it allows market diversity where market diversity needs to happen, but then the balancing view of that as well is that it allows us to do what's right for the learner in Northern Ireland. If the Minister makes a policy decision that's in the interests of the learner in Northern Ireland, we can take that particular direction, keeping an eye on comparability as well, so, it's a best-of-both-worlds balance in that scenario.

[275] **Simon Thomas:** And are you able to commission new exams, if you like, or new examination processes, in that sense? You have that sort of power?

[276] **Mr Edwards:** We do. Actually, within the enabling legislation for our organisation, from 1998 Order, we can commission work to develop it, if we don't have the in-house capability, or we can actually carry out and develop that work ourselves.

[277] **Simon Thomas:** Okay, thank you for that. Just one slightly technical point, then, which has been raised and this may be too technical, but there has been some debate around one part of this proposed Bill, which is—it happens to be section 29(3) if you're very interested in that, but the more important thing is that it says that it must be a Welsh version of the qualification that is approved in Wales. Now, the explanatory memorandum to the Bill says that that really means that Qualifications Wales has to approve the qualification, which wouldn't be a problem at all, as we all assume that, but the wording, which says 'a Welsh version', suggests that there has to be a Welsh version of every qualification. Is that something that, as awarding bodies, you've particularly looked at or have concerns about?

[278] **Mr Richardson:** Chair, I would think, from my point of view, looking at that wording, it is quite vague and it's not really clear what it means by 'Welsh version'. Do we mean a Welsh translation? Do we mean it meets the policy aims of the Welsh Government? Or do we mean that it's a qualification that's been accredited by Qualifications Wales, and, depending on the nature of those constraints, if you like, that will determine what we can make available?

[279] **Simon Thomas:** So, for you to continue to be comfortable operating under this new regime, you'd like that clarification in the Bill on those issues.

[280] **Mr Richardson:** Absolutely.

[281] **Mr McGlade:** And I agree with that. We would need some clarification on that. I mean, at the moment, any qualification that goes through, that we want to offer in Wales, goes through with a tick-box mechanism offered in Wales and funded in Wales. If that's the continuation of what is meant by a Welsh version of the qualification, then that in itself is an acceptable process. If there is another process that's added to the whole accreditation of qualifications that will become a Welsh version of the qualification, that adds to, I think—from some of our first points—some of those operational issues, and then we'd have to take that into consideration. So, clarity on that is paramount.

[282] **Simon Thomas:** So, commercially, it could put you off offering some qualifications in Wales, if it meant another process, as it were.

[283] **Mr McGlade:** Potentially operationally, because of the operational aspect of offering that, yes.

[284] **Simon Thomas:** Okay. Diolch yn fawr.

[285] **Ann Jones:** You okay? Right, okay, we'll move in to the commissioning model for restricted priority qualifications. Suzy.

[286] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, I notice in CCEA's evidence that you're quite sort of casual about this commissioning process, and that you had confidence that there was going to be no problem with it. Do you want to sort of take us through your thinking on that?

[287] **Mr Edwards:** I think that, in general, we were talking maybe from our experience, where there is opportunity within a market and, in the past, in our experience from CCEA, where we can't deliver it ourselves in terms of the qualification, we've been able to commission the work ourselves and bring that in to meet that particular market's experience. That has worked successfully. It goes through maybe as a CCEA product or we work with third parties, although, more so, we've brought the skills in-house ourselves, rather than having third party organisations to develop that, in more recent years.

[288] **Suzy Davies:** Could you give me some examples of the type of courses that you would be left to have to commission, because the market wouldn't supply it itself? Just one or two will do.

[289] **Ms Duffy:** One example I can give is a GCSE in learning for life and work. Because of the political circumstances that Northern Ireland found itself in emerging from conflict, for example, we felt that, societally, there was a need to bring forward a citizenship type of qualification, but also embedding particular issues that needed to be dealt with within the Northern Ireland context. So, that's an example of one that we developed ourselves within the Northern Ireland market and for a particular issue within Northern Ireland, if that's of any—

[290] **Suzy Davies:** No, no. That's very helpful, and I'm going back to my earlier question to Mr McGlade when I said, 'Are you likely to be picking up, in a Welsh market, the more peripheral kind of qualifications?' Are there any that you wouldn't provide? I'm looking at this as like a target where there's a big core, which is likely to be provided through mainstream processes, and a ring around that, that you said that you're probably likely to fill in. Is there something beyond that, which would definitely have to rely on commissioning?

[291] **Mr McGlade:** Okay. I think there are two things, from our point of view, that I need to make clear from our point of view. Those smaller entry subjects that we have agreed in principle that we will still provide under the Welsh market—

[292] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, Latin—[*Inaudible.*]

[293] **Mr McGlade:** —will not be Welsh-only specifications; they will be what we're currently designing for for the English market. I think the other aspect of that is—. Because this is only an agreement in principle, we don't know if Qualifications Wales will come back and try to commission with us about those smaller entry subjects. Therefore, commissioning may then mean that we have to have a Welsh version of the qualification and then we won't be in a position to offer those qualifications.

[294] **Mr Richardson:** The other thing I'd add to that is also that the qualifications provision in England isn't that clear yet, either. So, the first two phases have been defined and are clear, but there are a large number of other qualifications in the third phase that aren't yet clear. The decisions haven't been made yet on which of those will go forward or not, or if all of them will. So, until—. There's kind of a circular discussion around what provision is available across the borders in both countries and how awarding bodies are being asked to work within both jurisdictions.

[295] **Suzy Davies:** One of our concerns, perhaps, under this Bill, of course, though, would be that some of the priority qualifications might be open to commissioning. I just wondered if you had any views on that, bearing in mind that these priority qualifications would be designed—if that's the right word—to meet the needs of Welsh learners.

[296] **Mr McGlade:** Well, I mean, I'm hesitating in the answer to that, because, at this present moment in time, I don't know what those priority qualifications are. That hasn't been made clear, I don't think, to anybody.

[297] **Suzy Davies:** Well, I can hazard a guess that perhaps some Welsh language qualifications in mainstream subjects might be in there, shall we say?

[298] **Mr McGlade:** Okay. Okay.

[299] **Mr Richardson:** I'm hesitating for similar reasons, in that we don't know what the commissioning might look like, so it's really hard to give a hypothetical answer to a question when we don't really have enough information about what the circumstances might be around it.

[300] **Suzy Davies:** So, do you think there's a real challenge—all of you, now—for Qualifications Wales in identifying these priority or restricted subjects that are obviously a priority, but so restricted that they might have to be specially commissioned? Do you think there's a likelihood of that, or do you think the market is likely to be able to fulfil these priority qualifications?

[301] **Mr McGlade:** Well, I don't know whether I'm saying this from an OCR point of view or a personal point of view, but when I ask the question back, 'Will Qualifications Wales, will WJEC, be in a position to provide everything and, therefore, will they need to go down a commissioning route to bring some of those qualifications in Wales?', that may be the case for those other subject areas, so—

[302] **Suzy Davies:** Well, I suspect they might be more likely to be in vocational areas, you see. I mean, I can't say Latin's likely to be a priority subject, for example, but I bet on the

vocational side—

[303] **Mr McGlade:** You're quite right, and I think we started off the evidence submission, with, whenever we discussed it, we don't know where we are with those vocational qualifications at this stage and whether that will go into a commissioning model.

[304] **Mr Richardson:** That would be an area of particular interest for me, in the sense that there's a danger of switching off vocational routes through some sort of prioritisation model whereby, actually, people are getting value from them and they are progressing to worthwhile employment from having those qualifications. So, a great deal of thought into those individual qualifications and what they are providing to learners would need to be given before the prioritisation activity takes place. It is quite complex and there's a danger that, if it's rushed into without careful consideration, learners could find themselves not having the opportunities that they need.

11:30

[305] **Suzy Davies:** Thank you. Well, you've obviously got a different set-up, so have you got a different view on this?

[306] **Mr Edwards:** Yeah, I think one of the challenges around establishing prioritisation is how often you cycle or identify these priorities. If you identify the priorities too often and take in every opportunity, you could end up differentiating the market, to an extent, or having smaller qualifications that are difficult to benchmark, and, if you leave it too long, you could miss an economic or a social opportunity that is presenting itself. An example of that from the Northern Ireland context is: there's a strong demand for IT skills, particularly software engineering, in Northern Ireland. So, we were able to respond with a framework and develop a qualification in A-level software engineering, specifically for the Northern Ireland market; it is available if the open market wants to enter in on that basis. Awarding organisations have a lot of experience around that and a lot of core content that could be mapped directly across, but the question then arises: would you want to take a decision to develop that into a GCSE equivalent in software engineering or are the range of GCSE qualifications that lead into the A-level fit for purpose? In making that decision, you have to understand what the economic opportunity is, when it presents itself. Leave it too long, and, actually, you don't fulfil the market potential. Go too soon, and you could actually address an economic priority where it hasn't grown to its full potential on the way through. So, I think, actually, the management of the prioritisations, the linkages and triangulation between educators and industry, and listening to both voices on the supply and the demand, will be a crucial role for Qualifications Wales.

[307] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, I think that's fine. Thank you.

[308] **Aled Roberts:** Jest i ddatblygu'r pwynt roedd Suzy Davies yn ei wneud, yn amlwg, mae nifer y dysgwyr sydd yn astudio trwy'r iaith Gymraeg yn cynyddu. Mae CBAC wedi codi pryderon ynglŷn â'r ffaith bod yna ddim pwerau i Gymwysterau Cymru rhoi grantiau i gyrff er mwyn iddyn nhw ddarparu arholiadau trwy'r iaith Gymraeg. Rwy'n meddwl ein bod ni'n credu, hwyrach, nad Cymwysterau Cymru a fyddai'n talu'r grantiau, beth bynnag, ond pa mor ddibynnol ydych chi fel cyrff dyfarnu o ran datblygu cymwysterau trwy gyfrwng yr iaith Gymraeg ar y grantiau hynny ar hyn o bryd? A ydych

Aled Roberts: Just to develop the point that Suzy Davies was making, it's clear that the number of learners studying through the medium of Welsh is on the increase. The WJEC has raised concerns regarding the fact that there are no powers for Qualifications Wales to provide grants to bodies in order to provide examinations through the medium of Welsh. I think we believe, perhaps, that maybe Qualifications Wales shouldn't be the one paying the grants anyway, but how reliant are you as awarding bodies, in terms of developing qualifications through the medium of Welsh, on those grants at the

chi'n darparu trwy'r iaith Gymraeg ac a moment? Do you provide through the
 ydy'ch penderfyniad masnachol chi'n medium of Welsh and does your commercial
 dibynnu ar y ffaith bod y grantiau hynny ar decision depend on the fact that those grants
 gael? are available?

[309] **Mr McGlade:** Just in answer to that question, I know that I've, just this past year, been working with Welsh Government on two different grants, one for general qualifications and one for vocational qualifications. They help us to make the decision about moving forward with translation of those qualifications into Welsh. It's not a big marketplace for us, but it helps to make the decision on a commercial basis that the grants are available for us to do the translation.

[310] **Aled Roberts:** So, the grant, in effect, covers your translating costs.

[311] **Mr McGlade:** Not all of it, but it goes some way to do that.

[312] **Mr Richardson:** And we offer four applied GCEs, so four applied A-levels, through the medium of Welsh, and our advanced extension award in mathematics, on the general side. I have to say that the number of requests for translations are extremely small—in the single figures each year. In vocational qualifications, we've just committed to providing 11 of our new BTEC level 1s and 2s through the medium of Welsh as well, so we are committed to continue to do that. At the moment, the translation costs are recouped. It's a small part of the cost that's incurred, because there's quite a large operational activity that also is incurred around processing those translations and making sure that students get the right results.

[313] **Mr McGlade:** Can I, maybe, just add to that that the committee might be interested to know that one of our general qualifications that we translate into Welsh is Latin? [*Laughter.*]

[314] **Aled Roberts:** I dropped Latin in the third form, so—[*Laughter.*]

[315] **Simon Thomas:** It shows.

[316] **Ann Jones:** I remember taking Latin and struggling with it. I know I still can't—anyway, there you go.

[317] **Angela Burns:** [*Inaudible.*]

[318] **Ann Jones:** Well, that's about as far as I can go, yes, but we won't move on to that. It's not about me. Suzy, have you got anything else?

[319] **Suzy Davies:** No, that's all—[*Inaudible.*]

[320] **Ann Jones:** Okay, fine, thanks. We move to the relationship with awarding bodies, then. Angela, that's yours.

[321] **Angela Burns:** Yes, thank you. You've talked a lot about the need to have an open market and portable qualifications, and it's been interesting reading your submissions. Pearson group, you didn't really, sort of, pull any punches there, did you, talking about encouraging Qualifications Wales to work as collaboratively as possible with other regulators and awarding organisations? And I guess, CCEA, again, with you, if you're looking for a provider to come up with an examination such as, I think you mentioned, psychology, which isn't one that you do yourself, then you must have to have lots of discussions, I'm assuming, not just with the providers, but with Ofqual, and the whole tripartite sort of relationship that used to exist in different sorts of ways. I just wanted to have all of your takes on how you think that might work and how you think it might work with the three organisations now—

Qualifications Wales. How do you think it'll work, being able to go to Qualifications Wales rather than the Welsh Government, and, even from your point of view, what impact do you think that might have on your relationship back into this country? So, really, it's just about that whole umbrella thing, because without those strong relationships, none of this is really going to fly, is it? Justin?

[322] **Mr Edwards:** Absolutely. I mean, we know that SQA in Scotland already exists, and exists with a different set-up and a different system. Only last week I was on the phone to the chief executive of SQA. It requires constant conversations back and forth between the nations about transportability and comparability. Likewise, when we're seeking in the open market opportunities to fulfil needs that we've been asked to deliver, it is about conversations with chief executives of awarding organisations to look at the product range and how far the product range is in that nation in comparison to where we want to go.

[323] I think that in the open market situation in Northern Ireland, we have some divergence of policy, but the open market is very much that, in that the awarding organisation that brings psychology to Northern Ireland can actually bring it in the Ofqual verified format, and we will recognise that. It's only when we have divergence in the policy that we are asking the awarding body to make amendments to fit our framework at that particular point in time. So, it's not a majority difference; it's a minority difference, to fit what we see, or what the Minister sees as the needs of the learner in Northern Ireland. So, it does keep costs of development low and keeps costs back to the learner and the purchasers low at that particular point, and it allows us still to bring that innovation, without having to develop everything ourselves from CCEA's perspective as well. So, we do have that advantage.

[324] **Angela Burns:** Sorry, could I just clarify that, to just make sure that I really understood that? So, you might have a case where, let's say, you had 20 modules within a particular course, and you might have a case where 18 of them are the same for all the nations, but the last two might be different for each nation and, yet, we could get the awarding bodies or qualifications bodies to actually agree that it would have the same parity going forward to a university somewhere, for example.

[325] **Mr Edwards:** We have a difference in opinion on how we should assess science. It doesn't necessarily mean that—. The curriculum in science has similarities across the nations, but we have a divergence in policy in Northern Ireland—that we will retain the practical element. So, we are asking the awarding bodies to introduce a practical element for the assessment into the Northern Ireland market. So, yes, the core product remains established and you're asking for a level of variation to meet the Northern Ireland needs, to fit the purposes of Northern Ireland. Now, I suppose we are on the early journeys of that divergence, so it's constantly monitoring, as that policy comes in place, whether the awarding bodies can work with us in the open market situation, and whether CCEA need to develop that. In fact, the requirements for the sciences actually apply to CCEA as an awarding organisation currently in Northern Ireland.

[326] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. Paul and Derek?

[327] **Mr McGlade:** I think one of the things that I just want to stress about the relationship with awarding bodies and with Qualifications Wales, from the point of view of OCR and the rest of the awarding bodies, is that we are professional, experienced organisations that have been building these relationships with regulators and the other awarding bodies for quite a number of years—with regulators for our accreditation and qualifications, and with other awarding bodies whenever we're linking in to subject specifics and things like that. From the OCR point of view, we see that as something that will still move forward, regardless of whether it's within Welsh Government or Qualifications Wales.

[328] **Angela Burns:** Mr Richardson, I think your evidence was little bit stronger, but you raised some concerns perhaps about—

[329] **Mr Richardson:** Well, not so much—. We just think it's really important for awarding organisations and regulators to collaborate together and work together, because there is a danger that, in creating different regulatory systems, there is additional bureaucracy and additional administration that's built in, and what we need to ensure is that, where there are differences, they are necessary differences in order to meet the requirements of each country in which they're operating. We had experience when Ofqual was created of working with them, and we would like to work with Qualifications Wales in making sure that the systems that are put in place make the right outcomes for learners—that we can provide the right qualifications within those systems and that unnecessary bureaucracy isn't put in place.

[330] **Angela Burns:** I think you also make the comment about just a general experience level between going out of Welsh Government and into Qualifications Wales, but that's a short-term issue.

[331] **Mr Richardson:** Potentially. It takes quite a long time to build some of the experience though. The assessment expertise, particularly around standard-setting in general qualifications, is restricted to a very small number of people. The UK is kind of isolated in the way that it operates qualifications in an international context. So, it can take quite a lot of time to build that expertise within an organisation.

[332] **Angela Burns:** We had a previous evidence session talking to Universities Wales and ColegauCymru. They were talking about some of the frameworks that exist in Europe and internationally that they can measure courses and curriculum and, if you like, examinations against. So, when you say that we are quite unique and we have a very small sort of base of people able to carry this out, do we have some of that expertise here in Wales? Is it all sitting in Ofqual, because they were the main driver for so long? And how can we translate across, and then how would we then relationship back out into this European measurement? Does that make sense? Sorry, that's a very confused question.

[333] **Mr Richardson:** It is, and it's quite broad and there are some specifics in there that it would be important to untangle. So, in the UK, our general qualifications tend to be much more open-ended in response, much more subjective. They're the kind of skills that we place a high value on. In other jurisdictions around the world, their assessments tend to take more of multiple-choice, much more closed response-type questions. So, the nature of the tools that we use to measure those assessments and ensure standards are right is necessarily different. So, in the UK, we have expertise in setting standards in a certain way. In vocational qualifications, internationally, there tends to be much more internal assessment, and the drive in England in particular has been to put more towards external assessment at the moment, but with still a great weighting on internal assessment. So, the types of qualifications are different in the UK to elsewhere.

[334] **Ms Duffy:** Sorry, if I could also answer your point, awarding bodies work very collaboratively under the Joint Council for Qualifications. SQA are represented on that as well as WJEC, AQA, OCR, CCEA and City and Guilds. So, we do have that mechanism already in place, with monthly meetings around that and also various technical groups on which representatives from awarding bodies would sit across technical administration groups, groups dealing with malpractice. So, there is quite a strong body of work already and expertise across the sector.

[335] **Mr Richardson:** And the awarding bodies come together at regular intervals to assess the standards of the qualifications to make sure that they are of a comparable standard.

[336] **Ms Duffy:** And also, annually, on a general basis, the awarding bodies would come together with the regulators to share, as you say, statistics to ensure that the standards are comparable. That happens for each exam board, particularly the summer examination series.

[337] **Aled Roberts:** Can I just tease out something?

[338] **Ann Jones:** Go on then.

[339] **Aled Roberts:** I didn't understand from any of the answers—there is reference in the University of Wales's evidence to the European qualifications framework and also to an organisation I don't think any of us had heard of previously called NARIC, which operates outside the European context but provides some sort of consistency of approach. As far as the four nations are concerned at the moment, I think the point that we're trying to pursue is: is there a lead taken by Ofqual within that arrangement? How do those arrangements work? Is there representation from each of the four nations at the international, European level, or is there a lead taken at the UK level who then goes to Europe or the world with regard to ensuring portability of qualifications?

11:45

[340] **Mr Edwards:** On the accreditation side of my organisation, I have a person who has the lead relationship with the European qualifications framework and would travel to Brussels to engage on what that means for Northern Ireland. Then, my head of accreditation would meet the head of regulation or the heads of accreditation across the four nations to understand, maybe, the impact of that and synergies between the four nations, but I do have a European qualifications framework person.

[341] **Aled Roberts:** Okay.

[342] **Mr McGlade:** All of the awarding bodies do participate in all of those things to do with the EQF, the European credit system for vocational education and training, and the European quality assurance in vocational education and training. I know that we have a group that meets, and I am on the advisory group for that in Northern Ireland. That feeds into a bigger UK group as well. So, there is a similar group in Wales. I suppose we're all tasked now at the minute with all of our qualifications meeting those European qualification framework levels and things. NARIC is an organisation that, I think, anybody can go into and look at the comparable qualifications and levels.

[343] **Ann Jones:** Angela, very quickly.

[344] **Angela Burns:** A question for you, Chair; could we make sure that we ask a question to the Minister, when he next comes in, about what exposure we've had in the past on that international stage for portability of qualifications?

[345] **Ann Jones:** Yeah. Go on then, Keith.

[346] **Keith Davies:** There used to be—I don't know if it still exists—a database of accredited qualifications.

[347] **Mr McGlade:** In Wales?

[348] **Keith Davies:** In Wales, and across the UK.

[349] **Mr McGlade:** In the UK, it's an Ofqual register and, in Wales, it's the database of approved qualifications in Wales. So, we have to feed into DAQW, and everything that we

provide within Wales still goes onto DAQW. I'm assuming that's what you mean.

[350] **Keith Davies:** Yes.

[351] **Mr McGlade:** That still exists.

[352] **Ann Jones:** Right. Crikey, we have to move on. Financial and commercial issues, Aled.

[353] **Aled Roberts:** Mae adran 40 o'r Bil yn caniatáu i Gymwysterau Cymru ddarparu gwasanaethau ymgynghori a gwasanaethau eraill ar sail fasnachol. Rwyf jest *really* eisiau gwybod a yw hynny'n gyffredin yn y gwledydd eraill, achos roedd CBAC yn codi rhai pryderon bod posibilrwydd o wrthdaro pe baem yn edrych ar sefyllfa lle mae Cymwysterau Cymru yn caffael gwasanaethau gan gyrff sydd hefyd â chyfrifoldeb o ran rheoleiddio. Nid wyf yn gwybod a yw'r fath busnes masnachol yn gyffredin o ran corff cymwysterau yn y gwledydd eraill, *really*.

Aled Roberts: Section 40 of the Bill allows Qualifications Wales to provide consultancy services and other services on a commercial basis. I just wanted to know whether that is common in other countries, because CBAC raised some concerns that there was the potential for conflict of interest if we look at a situation where Qualifications Wales procures services from bodies where they have responsibilities in terms of regulation. I don't know whether that kind of commercial business is common in terms of a qualifications body in other countries, really.

[354] **Mr McGlade:** I actually don't think that exists, if I'm truthful, but one of the things I would say is that, if that does go forward, there's going to need to be a lot of communication around how that's basically communicated to the general public, because it would lead to quite a bit of confusion if that body, Qualifications Wales, as regulator, was commissioning for subjects and things. I am not sure how that would work, but that would in itself lead to some confusion out in the marketplace with schools and colleges.

[355] **Mr Edwards:** I think, from my perspective, it's the scope of that authority and how that would be used to limit, as you say, the confusion. My organisation can commission services if it wants to commission services, bringing in expertise, but it's on the basis of bringing in expertise in maybe a specialist area, and it often relates to the awarding organisation side. I'm mindful that absolutely the integrity must be within CCEA—my organisation—to deliver the overarching advice that we're commissioned to do and only when necessary bring in the expertise. Certainly, if the scope widened to bringing in other awarding organisations to provide advice on the standards, then you can immediately see the potential for conflict.

[356] **Aled Roberts:** And is that restriction contained within legislation in Northern Ireland or is—

[357] **Mr Edwards:** No.

[358] **Aled Roberts:** Okay. Because the legislation as drafted here at the moment is a very wide power and refers to 'any other matter that—'. I've got it in Welsh so I'm translating; I'm not doing very well. Any other matter that is to do with qualifications, so it's a totally open—

[359] **Mr Richardson:** It's quite a wide power.

[360] **Aled Roberts:** That's the word I was looking for.

[361] **Mr Richardson:** It's difficult to give a judgment without knowing the nature of the

services that might be offered and provided. As Justin said, there's a potential conflict of interest so you have to consider carefully what walls are put in place to prevent that.

[362] **Mr Edwards:** I think from the perspective of my role, I'm a non-departmental public body and therefore an accounting officer. As an accounting officer, I have to be considerate of the conflict of interest. Therefore in the role of an accounting officer, there is a level afforded of protection that would make judgments of what would be a conflict and avoid those.

[363] **Mr McGlade:** Can I maybe sort of elaborate on a thought that has just occurred to me? Going back to my relationship with our CCEA as regulators in Northern Ireland—and Justin you can back me up on this if I'm wrong or whatever—but there are certain occasions, and I'm assuming it's a commissioning model from our department of education, where the accreditation team take forward certain projects. One of the ones that we have at the moment is on special educational needs and the brochure that we're putting out to special schools—that, in particular, we're putting out to special schools. And that needs to be managed in a very succinct way to ensure that the message going out to schools is not coming from the awarding-body side of CCEA, but coming from the accreditation side of CCEA. So, I'm assuming that is some sort of a model that the department negotiate with yourselves to provide.

[364] **Mr Edwards:** The department can commission CCEA to carry out work or advise on specific topics under a project heading. The scope of that project heading is very clear to me as an accounting officer to deliver that, so I do come back to the point that maybe the opportunity is afforded in the accounting officer role rather than—. The legislation is the enabler but there are safeguards on conflict within the AO role and also the commissioner of the arm's-length body from the sponsoring department.

[365] **Aled Roberts:** Yes, and, really, the situation that you've just described falls into the category that you were talking about where it's the specialism that's actually commissioned in. So, it's very restricted, rather than a wide power. Can I just ask a final question, really? The explanatory memorandum sets out the fact that there's an additional cost in the first five years of some £15.7 million, compared with the current system. I guess the widening of the possibilities as far as commercial activities maybe is in order to keep the costs to the Government or to end users to a minimum. But, of course, if those activities are restricted or if they're not as successful as perhaps as is initially envisaged, the Bill also allows Qualifications Wales to raise fees on awarding bodies for the accreditation, I guess, of the qualification. The Welsh Government has that power at the moment but it's never exercised it. I guess some of the concerns for us may be that, if the power is there, given that cash is tight at the moment and Qualifications Wales find themselves in a difficult financial situation, there will be a temptation on them to pass those fees on to the awarding bodies. I guess the question we need to ask is whether those fees would make it less attractive for you to operate in Wales, or, if you did operate in Wales, whether or not you would then pass those fees on to the schools and colleges by way of increased examination fees.

[366] **Mr McGlade:** And I think the answer to that would be very clearly that if that was to be imposed, then yes, it would make the situation for awarding organisations to make a decision that they weren't going to move forward to offer those qualifications in Wales, if we were being charged to go through that accreditation process. I would presume that, if we did go down that road of paying to have accreditation within Wales, then, you're quite right, that would increase fees to our end users within schools and colleges.

[367] **Mr Richardson:** I think, from our point of view, it's difficult to give a definitive answer at the moment because we don't know what the fees would be. The key issue for us is around transparency, so if it was a straightforward, simple administration fee, where it was really clearly transparent that it was only the administration that was being charged, that might

be something that could make it possible. But if there was a sense that it was almost having a biased effect—in other words, there was almost an incentive on the regulator to get more organisations to submit qualifications for accreditation, and then keep submitting them—then that could have an undue impact or an unforeseen consequence.

[368] **Aled Roberts:** What's the position in the other jurisdictions currently? Are you charged for accreditation?

[369] **Mr McGlade:** No.

[370] **Mr Richardson:** No.

[371] **Mr McGlade:** And just one of the things that we discussed just before we came in was about the commercial aspect that awarding bodies are always labelled with. I think we, sort of, came up with a scenario whereby Qualifications Wales would also then be, in inverted commas, referred to as a 'commercial' organisation, if they were going to charge us for the accreditation of qualifications.

[372] **Aled Roberts:** Okay.

[373] **Ann Jones:** I think that some of the other questions that we were going to ask have been covered, so in view of the fact that we are approaching midday, and I don't think anybody else, really—. No. Can I thank you for coming and giving us the evidence and for the written papers? We'll send you a copy of the transcript to check, so that we haven't—. That forms part of the publication of our report, so if you could just check that and we could have it back, that would be good. Thank you all very much. A safe journey to those of you who are travelling quite a distance.

11:56

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[374] **Ann Jones:** Just on item 4, there are a couple of papers to note—if Members can note those papers. Then, if that's okay, the next meeting is on 28 January, when we're taking further evidence on the Qualifications Wales Bill. And so with that, I'll close the meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11:57.
The meeting ended at 11:57.*